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ABSTRACT

This study sought to review the extent of hazing at the three Department of Defense (DOD) service academies, the actions taken by the academies to control and eliminate hazing, and the impact of hazing on cadets and midshipmen. The three academies studied were the Naval Academy (Annapolis, Maryland), the Air Force Academy (Colorado Springs, Colorado), and the Military Academy (West Point, New York). Reviewed for the study were academy rules and regulations, historical accounts of the academies, studies related to hazing or the operation of the indoctrination system, and files and disciplinary cases involving hazing and related offenses. The study also involved interviews and questionnaires with academy officials, faculty and cadets and midshipmen. The study found that some of the difficulty lay with understanding the distinction between legitimate indoctrination and hazing. However, the study also found that some forms of hazing continue to occur including verbal harassment; that academies rarely charge students with hazing; that recent changes in the entering student system have had some positive effect; and that exposure to hazing is related to negative student outcomes. The report offers recommendations designed to decrease and eventually eliminate hazing within the services. Three appendixes contain comments from the DOD, description of the questionnaire methodology, and a list of major contributors to the report. (JB)

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United States General Accounting Office

GAO

Report to Congressional Requesters

November 1992

DOD SERVICE ACADEMIES

More Changes Needed to Eliminate Hazing

ED353902

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United States
General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548

National Security and
International Affairs Division

B-240866

November 16, 1992

The Honorable Sam Nunn
Chairman, Committee on
Armed Services
United States Senate

The Honorable John Glenn
Chairman, Subcommittee on
Manpower and Personnel
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate

As part of a comprehensive review you requested of student treatment at the Department of Defense (DOD) service academies, we collected information on the treatment of fourth class midshipmen and cadets at the Naval Academy, the Air Force Academy, and the Military Academy. The purpose of this report is to (1) determine the extent of hazing at each of the academies, (2) review the academies' actions to control and eliminate hazing, and (3) assess the impact of hazing on cadets and midshipmen.

As arranged with your staff, unless you publicly announce its contents earlier, we plan no further distribution of this report until 15 days from its date of issue. At that time, we will send copies to other interested congressional committees and Members of Congress; the Secretaries of Defense, the Army, the Air Force, and the Navy; and the Superintendents of the Military Academy, the Naval Academy, and the Air Force Academy. We will also make copies available to other interested parties on request.

This report was prepared under the direction of Paul L. Jones, Director, Defense Force Management Issues. If you or your staff have any questions concerning this report, he can be reached on (202) 275-3990. The major contributors to this report are listed in appendix III.

Frank C Conahan

Frank C. Conahan
Assistant Comptroller General

Executive Summary

Purpose

In the wake of several highly publicized incidents at the Naval Academy involving the alleged mistreatment of midshipmen, the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Armed Services and the Chairman of its Subcommittee on Manpower and Personnel asked GAO to (1) determine the extent of hazing at the three Department of Defense (DOD) service academies, (2) review the actions taken by the academies to control and eliminate hazing, and (3) assess the impact of hazing on cadets and midshipmen.

Background

The service academies are one of the primary sources for acquiring newly commissioned officers. The academies have provided about 9 percent of annual officer accessions over the last 20 years. Each of the academies operates a fourth class system to indoctrinate freshmen (referred to as fourth class cadets or midshipmen) into the academy and provide a leadership laboratory to train upperclassmen. Over the years, each of the academies has built up a variety of traditional practices regarding the treatment of fourth class students. Some of these practices are sanctioned by the academies. Others, however, exceed the bounds established by the academies and can be considered hazing. GAO uses the term "hazing-type treatment" in this report to reflect the fact that the distinction between appropriate and inappropriate behavior often lies in the degree of the treatment and the manner in which it is conducted.

Hazing at the academies has a long history, dating back to the Civil War era at the Military and Naval academies. At times, hazing resulted in deaths and serious injuries. In 1874, Congress passed legislation outlawing hazing at the Naval Academy. Today, 10 U.S.C. prohibits hazing at all three service academies.

Results in Brief

Despite being outlawed for over a century, hazing has never completely disappeared from the service academies. The distinction between hazing and legitimate fourth class indoctrination is somewhat unclear. Many of the traditional elements of the fourth class systems are subject to potential abuse by upperclass students. At all three academies, hazing-type treatment occurs more frequently than officially filed charges would imply. The academies have rarely charged anyone with hazing and have usually chosen to pursue hazing-type offenses using a lesser charge.

Recent changes to the fourth class systems at the Military and Naval academies appear to have had some success at reducing the extent of hazing-type treatment. However, some kinds of hazing-type activities continue. The Air Force Academy has not conducted an in-depth review of its fourth class system similar to those conducted at the other academies and it has shown no recent reduction in the level of hazing.

Hazing-type treatment can have adverse effects on cadets and midshipmen. A strong correlation exists between a measure of exposure to such treatment and measures of undesirable outcomes, including higher levels of physical and psychological stress among cadets and midshipmen, lower grade point averages, attrition from the academies, and reduced career motivation.

Principal Findings

The Distinction Between Legitimate Indoctrination and Hazing Is Not Well Understood

The distinction between allowable fourth class indoctrination and improper fourth class treatment was unclear to a significant number of cadets and midshipmen. The belief that a rigorous fourth class year is an effective method for developing military officers has been accepted largely as an article of faith. Moreover, certain elements of the traditional fourth class systems are particularly prone to abuse, such as actions taken by upperclassmen to create stress for deficient freshmen.

Some Forms of Hazing Continue to Occur

Responses from students and academy officers to a GAO questionnaire indicate that some forms of hazing-type treatment are still fairly common. For example, the majority of the students at all three academies indicated that at least a couple of times a month during their fourth class year they had been (1) subjected to upperclassmen screaming in their face; (2) verbally harassed, insulted, and ridiculed; (3) required to memorize and recite trivia; and (4) forced to use study hours to prepare for fourth class duties. More physically abusive forms of hazing, such as dunking fourth class students in toilets, using physical restraints, covering fourth class students with shaving cream or other substances, or spraying them with water, appeared to occur less often.

The officers on the commandants' staffs appeared to generally concur with the extent of hazing cited by the students, except for the Air Force Academy officers, who indicated a significantly lower level of hazing-type treatment than that reported by Air Force Academy students. Officers from all three academies also acknowledged that many of the hazing-type activities they recognized as occurring were against academy regulations.

Academies Have Rarely Charged Students With Hazing

Examination of academy disciplinary records revealed that few individuals have been charged with hazing, an offense for which a student could be dismissed. In reviewing past conduct cases adjudicated by the academies, the DOD Inspector General, the Navy Inspector General, and GAO each identified additional cases that appeared to involve hazing but resulted in the offenders being charged with lesser offenses.

Recent Changes to Fourth Class Systems Have Had Some Success

In 1990, the Military Academy overhauled its fourth class indoctrination system based on an extensive self-examination. Following several highly publicized incidents, the Naval Academy also made a number of changes to its plebe indoctrination system in the 1990-91 and 1991-92 academic years. The changes made by these two academies focused on using more positive leadership development techniques and reducing some of the more abuse-prone elements of the fourth class system.

Student responses to a GAO questionnaire suggest that these changes have had some success. The class entering after the changes reported a lower frequency of hazing-type treatment than the previous three classes.

Exposure to Hazing-type Treatment Is Related to Undesirable Outcomes

While some may view hazing as relatively harmless, done in a spirit of fun as a pressure release valve, such a view may not recognize the serious effects that hazing can have on those subjected to it. GAO's analysis of questionnaire responses identified a strong correlation between self-reported frequency of exposure to hazing-type treatment and higher frequency of self-reported physical and psychological stress symptoms, lower grade point averages, more frequent thoughts about leaving the academy, and lower motivation toward making the service a career.

Changing the Fourth Class System Will Not Be Easy

The fourth class systems at the academies have evolved slowly and they continue to reflect traditions and customs begun many years ago. Responses to GAO questionnaires revealed that the majority of students, particularly those in the upper classes, hold traditional views regarding the purpose and operation of the fourth class system. Consequently, the academies can expect considerable resistance to change and will need to involve their student bodies, faculty, staff, and alumni in the process of understanding why changes are needed and how they should be determined.

Recommendations

GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense ensure that the Military and Naval academies continue their efforts to clarify the objectives of their fourth class systems to eliminate remaining elements that serve no demonstrated developmental purpose. GAO also recommends that the Air Force Academy conduct a thorough assessment of its fourth class system, similar in scope and scale to those conducted at the other academies.

In addition, GAO recommends that the academy superintendents take various actions aimed at

- decreasing the likelihood of cadets and midshipmen engaging in hazing-type treatment by sharpening the definition of hazing to clarify the distinction between hazing and legitimate fourth class indoctrination;
- improving enforcement of the prohibition against hazing by developing an explicit policy on enforcement, identifying measures to prevent repeat offenses, and taking appropriate action against offenders when hazing has occurred; and
- educating the students, faculty, staff, and alumni on the need to curb hazing-type treatment.

Agency Comments and GAO Evaluation

DOD stated that the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Force Management and Personnel) had expanded oversight of service officer accession programs and would continue to work with the services and the academies to ensure that the highest possible training and discipline standards were consistently maintained. DOD agreed with many of GAO's findings but did not agree that many of the recommendations were needed. DOD stated that the services and academies were already addressing the issues identified in the report.

While GAO agrees the academies have taken some recent actions to improve their fourth class systems and DOD has increased its oversight, GAO sees a need for further actions to eliminate vestiges of the traditional fourth class systems that are of questionable value in the development of military officers, improve the enforcement of regulations against hazing, facilitate reporting of hazing incidents, and protect students who report hazing from reprisals.

Contents

Executive Summary 2

Chapter 1 Introduction 10
- Background 10
- Fourth Class Indoctrination Systems 10
- Hazing at the Academies Has a Long History 11
- Hazing Is Prohibited by Law 13
- Objectives, Scope, and Methodology 13

Chapter 2 Treatment of Fourth Class Midshipmen at the Naval Academy 15
- Traditional Elements of Fourth Class Life at the Naval Academy 15
- Distinction Between Hazing and Legitimate Fourth Class Indoctrination Was Not Clear 16
- Hazing-Type Offenses Were Usually Charged as Lesser Offenses 17
- Naval Academy Has Made Recent Attempts to Control Hazing 19
- Hazing-Type Treatment Appears to Have Been Reduced, but Some Forms Remain 21
- Midshipmen's Views on Hazing Vary According to Class 25
- Agency Comments 28

Chapter 3 Treatment of Fourth Class Cadets at the Air Force Academy 29
- Traditional Elements of Fourth Class Life at the Air Force Academy 29
- Regulations Prohibit Hazing and Related Offenses 31
- No Recent Major Reviews or Changes to the Fourth Class System 32
- Few Cases of Hazing or Related Offenses Have Been Charged 32
- The Frequency of Hazing-Type Treatment Appears Stable Over the Recent Past 33
- Cadet Views on Hazing Vary by Class 37
- Agency Comments and Our Evaluation 40

Chapter 4 Treatment of Fourth Class Cadets at the Military Academy

Chapter 4 41

Traditional Elements of Fourth Class Life at the Military Academy 41

Hazing-Type Offenses Have Usually Been Charged as Lesser Offenses 43

Fourth Class System Overhauled in 1990 45

Hazing-Type Treatment Appears to Have Been Reduced, but Some Forms Remain 47

Cadet Views on Hazing Vary by Class 51

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation 54

Chapter 5 The Effect of Hazing on Cadets and Midshipmen 55

Hazing Can Result in Physical and Psychological Stress 55

Hazing Interferes With Academics 58

Hazing May Increase Attrition 61

Hazing May Deter Some From Making the Military a Career 63

Conclusions 65

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation 65

Chapter 6 The Academies Have Not Addressed All Issues to Eliminate Hazing 67

The Limits of Legitimate Fourth Class Indoctrination Are Still Unclear to Many 67

Questionable Elements of the Traditional Fourth Class System Still Exist 68

Opinions About the Length of the Fourth Class Indoctrination Period Are Mixed 71

Possible Causes of Inconsistent Enforcement of Prohibitions Against Hazing 73

Cadets and Midshipmen May Resist Changes in the Fourth Class System 75

Conclusions 79

Recommendations 81

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation 82

Appendixes

Appendix I: Comments From the Department of Defense 86

Appendix II: Description of Questionnaire Methodology 108

Appendix III: Major Contributors to This Report 115

Tables

Table II.1: Sampling Errors for Various Academy Subgroups 113

Figures

Figure 2.1: Hazing-Type Treatment Cited by Naval Academy Midshipmen as Occurring a Couple of Times a Month or More 22
Figure 2.2: Percentage of Naval Academy Midshipmen Indicating That Specific Hazing-Type Activities Should Not Be Allowed 26
Figure 3.1: Hazing-Type Treatment Cited by Air Force Academy Cadets as Occurring a Couple of Times a Month or More 34
Figure 3.2: Percentage of Air Force Academy Cadets Indicating That Specific Hazing-Type Activities Should Not Be Allowed 38
Figure 4.1: Hazing-Type Treatment Cited by Military Academy Cadets as Occurring a Couple of Times a Month or More 48
Figure 4.2: Percentage of Military Academy Cadets Indicating That Specific Hazing-Type Activities Should Not Be Allowed 52
Figure 5.1: Relationship Between Hazing-Type Treatment and Physical Stress Among Fourth Class Students 57
Figure 5.2: Relationship Between Hazing-Type Treatment and Psychological Stress Among Fourth Class Students 58
Figure 5.3: Percentage of Cadets and Midshipmen Who Agree That "Learning Fourth Class Knowledge Has Priority Over Homework" 60
Figure 5.4: Relationship Between Hazing-Type Treatment and Academic Grade Point Average Among Fourth Class Students 61
Figure 5.5: Relationship Between Hazing-Type Treatment and Thoughts About Leaving the Academy Among Fourth Class Students 63
Figure 5.6: Relationship Between Hazing-Type Treatment and Decrease in Career Motivation Among Fourth Class Students 64
Figure 5.7: Relationship Between Hazing-Type Treatment and Decrease in Career Motivation Among Upperclass Students 65
Figure 6.1: Cadet and Midshipman Views Regarding When Fourth Class Indoctrination Should End 73
Figure 6.2: Cadet and Midshipman Views Regarding What the Emphasis of Fourth Class Year Should Be 78

Figure 6.3: Percentage of Students Who Believe That Fourth Class Year Should Be Used to Screen Out Those Who Do Not Belong 79

Abbreviations

AOC	Air Officers Commanding
CLDS	Cadet Leader Development System
CO	Company Officers
DOD	Department of Defense
GAO	General Accounting Office
POW	prisoner of war
USAFA	U.S. Air Force Academy
USMA	U.S. Military Academy
USNA	U.S. Naval Academy
1/c	first class (senior) cadet or midshipman
2/c	second class (junior) cadet or midshipman
3/c	third class (sophomore) cadet or midshipman
4/c	fourth class (freshman) cadet or midshipman

Introduction

Background

The service academies, one of the primary officer accession sources, have provided about 9 percent of the services' newly commissioned officers over the last 20 years. Students at the academies undergo a rigorous 4-year program that includes academics, military training, and physical conditioning. Officers graduating from the academies have long been considered the standard for military professionalism.

Fourth Class Indoctrination Systems

Each of the academies operates a fourth class system to indoctrinate new cadets and midshipmen into the academy and to provide a leadership laboratory to train upperclass cadets and midshipmen.[1] The fourth class year consists of initial summer training[2] and academic year training. The purpose of the fourth class system is to help students transition from civilian or enlisted life. It is intended to promote such characteristics as self-discipline, professional knowledge, physical fitness, ethics, teamwork, and esprit de corps among the fourth class cadets and midshipmen through a demanding and intense environment.

By tradition and custom, each of the fourth class systems has built up a variety of practices that have been part of the programs for decades, and some have been around for a century or more. Many of these traditional practices subject fourth class cadets and midshipmen to some degree of stress and discomfort. In a 1975 GAO report on the extent of hazing at the service academies,[3] we noted that it was difficult to differentiate hazing from activities permitted under the various fourth class systems.

That report also identified a number of traditional fourth class system activities that could be perceived as hazing. In commenting on that report, Department of Defense (DOD) and service officials stated that while individuals undergoing training programs or outsiders might perceive certain activities as hazing, they actually served a legitimate training function and were continually scrutinized to ensure that they contributed positively to the training mission.

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[1] At the academies, freshmen are referred to as fourth class cadets and midshipmen; sophomores, as third class; juniors, as second class; and seniors, as first class. In addition, fourth class students are commonly referred to as "plebes" at the Military and Naval academies and as "doolies" at the Air Force Academy.

[2] Referred to as Cadet Basic Training or "Beast Barracks" at the Military Academy, Plebe Summer at the Naval Academy, and Basic Cadet Training at the Air Force Academy.

[3] Report to Representative Samuel S. Stratton (GAO/FPCD-75-133, Mar. 14, 1975).

A key component of each academy's fourth class system involves a clear line of differentiation between the fourth class and the upper classes. In these systems, the upper classes take on major responsibility for training and indoctrinating the fourth class cadets and midshipmen. It is within this capacity that some upperclassmen have sometimes overstepped the intended boundary between legitimate fourth class indoctrination and hazing.

Hazing at the Academies Has a Long History

According to historians, hazing was not always present at the service academies.[4] Before the Civil War, hazing generally occurred only during summer encampments and entailed harmless pranks played on plebes. The treatment, called "deviling," was carried out for the pure amusement of upperclass cadets. Typical examples involved pulling a sleeping plebe out of bed, cutting tent ropes in the middle of the night, and hiding a plebe's clothes at night, causing him to be late for formation or to have to report wrapped in a blanket. Academy officials paid little attention to these activities, which ended when classes began.

After the Civil War, hazing took on a different look. It extended throughout the fourth class year and became much more virulent in its form. The upperclassmen gradually evolved an entire code of unwritten laws governing their relations with the plebes. Faced with this increase in hazing activity, the academies began trying to control it. In the 1870s, the West Point Superintendent labeled the practices "essentially criminal" and called them a "vicious and illegal indulgence"; and the Superintendent of the Naval Academy referred to the hazing of junior class cadets as a "cruel and senseless practice."

Despite being outlawed, hazing never completely disappeared and it periodically resurfaced as a problem in the late 1800s. By the early 1900s, over 100 methods of annoying and harassing fourth classmen had been identified. They ranged from making plebes stand upside down to forcing them to drink tabasco sauce. If a plebe refused to comply, he would be required to fight a member of the upper class.

Hazing was perpetuated by graduates who encouraged the upperclassmen to use it as a method of suppressing the cockiness of the plebes. Hazing was defended on the basis that others had been exposed to it without injury and had presumably benefitted from it. In addition, the plebes did not object to it because they felt it would make better men out of them and, by showing how much they could endure, increase their status among their peers.

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[4] S.E. Ambrose, Duty, Honor, Country: A History of West Point (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1966); P. Benjamin, The United States Naval Academy (New York: G.P. Putnam, 1900); Capt. W.D. Puleston, Annapolis: Gangway to the Quarterdeck (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1942).

Superintendents have generally tended to oppose hazing, partly because it violated regulations and occasionally resulted in serious injury or even death. For example, according to a 1901 congressional hearing on hazing at West Point, one plebe who had been challenged to a fight refused to get up after being hit by one solid punch. He was ostracized by the cadets who thought he was a coward. When he continued at the Academy, the upperclassmen began a systematic hazing campaign against him, a key feature of which involved forcing him to drink tabasco sauce with every meal. He eventually resigned, but by then his throat was so badly inflamed that he could not drink any liquid but water. Within a year he died of tuberculosis of the larynx.

Hazing incidents also led to congressional investigations. In 1901, the House of Representatives convened a select committee to investigate the practice of hazing at West Point following the deaths of two former cadets (including the previously mentioned case) shortly after they left the Academy. Congress also debated the issue of hazing at the Naval Academy in 1906 and, in 1909, required the Secretary of War to submit a report on hazing at the Military Academy.

Attempts to eliminate hazing were largely unsuccessful because it was supported by the graduates and faculty and the plebes saw it as a point of honor not to reveal the names of those who hazed them. Douglas MacArthur endured excessive hazing because his father was a ranking general in the Army. He was once forced to do a rigorous exercise until he lost all control of his muscles and collapsed, unable to move. However, at a congressional hearing called to investigate the nature and extent of hazing, MacArthur refused to name any of those involved who had not already implicated themselves.

Hazing Is Prohibited by Law

In 1874, Congress passed legislation requiring the Superintendent of the Naval Academy to order a court-martial in cases of hazing[5]. The U.S. Attorney General, in an 1885 opinion, determined that to constitute the offense of hazing, the victim must be a member of the fourth class.[6] Over the years, the statutes regarding hazing have been extended to the other academies and modified a number of times.

Currently, hazing is prohibited at the Naval Academy by 10 U.S.C. 6964. That law defines hazing as

> "any unauthorized assumption of authority by a midshipman whereby another midshipman suffers or is exposed to any cruelty, indignity, humiliation, hardship, or oppression, or the deprivation or abridgement of any right."

The law also requires that the Superintendent of the Naval Academy prescribe regulations to prevent hazing and that those regulations be approved by the Secretary of the Navy. It states that hazing may be dealt with as "an offense against good order and discipline" or as a violation of the regulations of the Naval Academy. It notes, however, that a midshipman cannot be dismissed for a single act of hazing, except by sentence of a court-martial.

The laws prohibiting hazing at the Military Academy (10 U.S.C. 4352) and the Air Force Academy (10 U.S.C. 9352) are worded differently than that pertaining to the Naval Academy. These laws state that the superintendent shall issue regulations, subject to the approval of the service secretary, that (1) define hazing, (2) are designed to prevent hazing, and (3) prescribe dismissal, suspension, or other adequate punishment for violations. A cadet who commits a hazing-related infraction can also be charged under the Uniform Code of Military Justice for conduct unbecoming an officer candidate. The laws also note that if a cadet charged with hazing makes a written request for a trial by court-martial, that cadet may not be dismissed except under order of such a court.

Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

As a result of several highly publicized incidents at the Naval Academy, the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Armed Services and the Chairman of its Subcommittee on Manpower and Personnel, asked us to review the treatment of students at the three DOD service academies. This report is one of a series of reports examining various aspects of student treatment at the academies. The objectives of this report are to (1) determine the extent of hazing at the three academies, (2) review the actions taken by the academies to control and eliminate hazing, and (3) assess the impact of hazing on cadets and midshipmen.

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[5] Act of June 23, 1874, ch. 453, 18 Stat. 203.

[6] 18 Op.Atty.Gen. 292 (1885).

We reviewed academy rules and regulations, historical accounts of the academies, studies related to hazing or the operation of the fourth class indoctrination system, and files on disciplinary cases involving hazing or related offenses. We interviewed academy officials, faculty, and cadets and midshipmen.

We also administered questionnaires at each of the three academies to samples of cadets and midshipmen, faculty, and members of the commandant's staff. A detailed description of the surveys and related methodological issues appears in appendix II.

Gathering data on hazing using mass-administered questionnaires is problematic. A given type of treatment might be approved by academy officials as long as it is conducted in a certain manner or restricted in time or degree. Recognizing the difficulty of precisely distinguishing the line between hazing and activities permitted under the various fourth class systems, we used the term "hazing-type treatment" in describing our questionnaire results.

We performed our review at the Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland; the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado; and the Military Academy at West Point, New York. We performed our review from June 1990 to July 1992 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

Treatment of Fourth Class Midshipmen at the Naval Academy

The U.S. Naval Academy was established in 1845 in Annapolis, Maryland. During academic year 1990-91, about 4,391 midshipmen attended the Academy, including 1,157 plebes (members of the Class of 1994).

The plebe year is intended to be a rigorous transition to the military. Traditional elements of the fourth class year put plebes under a high degree of stress. The distinction between the kind of plebe treatment that is authorized and hazing is not always clear. When midshipmen have gone beyond the authorized bounds, academy officials have tended to avoid charging them with hazing, opting instead to cite them for lesser charges. Recent Naval Academy actions to control hazing appear to have had some success. However, certain kinds of hazing-type treatment continue.

Traditional Elements of Fourth Class Life at the Naval Academy

The stated objectives of the Naval Academy's fourth class system are to (1) facilitate the transition from civilian to midshipman, (2) teach plebes to learn and think under pressure, (3) develop the plebe's knowledge of the Naval Academy and the Navy, (4) improve the physical fitness of the plebes, and (5) facilitate the leadership development of the upperclass midshipmen. The system is intended to place plebes in an intense environment and provide them with a rigorous transition from civilian life to the military.

The fourth class system at the Naval Academy includes customs and practices that have been in existence for many years. Plebes have traditionally been required to move at double-time (called "chopping") down the center of hallways in Bancroft Hall (the midshipman dormitory), square their corners by pivoting at a 90-degree angle, and "sound-off" with a spirit-related phrase (typically "Beat Army, Sir"). They were forbidden to speak in hallways unless spoken to by an officer or upperclassman.

Another tradition is the requirement that plebes memorize certain facts and information called fourth class knowledge or "plebe rates." Traditional elements of fourth class knowledge included information about the Academy and its customs, naval history and lore, nautical terms, and trivia such as menus, sports scores, television schedules, and the number of days until such milestones as the next Army game or leave period. Some upperclassmen questioned plebes on their fourth class knowledge in a harsh, impolite manner. If a plebe was unable to recite his fourth class knowledge, he or she could be given demerits, required to do calisthenics, or required to report to an upperclassman's room during "come-around" period to demonstrate that the deficiency has been rectified.

Mealtimes were a period of stress for plebes, who were required to eat at attention, sitting on the edge of their chair without touching the chair back, looking straight ahead (referred to as "eyes in the boat"), and eating their food with "three chews and a swallow." It was during meals that much of the questioning of plebes about their fourth class knowledge would take place.

Distinction Between Hazing and Legitimate Fourth Class Indoctrination Was Not Clear

The fourth class indoctrination instruction in place during the 1989-90 academic year stated that all forms of hazing were strictly prohibited, and defined hazing as

> "any unauthorized assumption of authority by a midshipman whereby another midshipman suffers or is exposed to any cruelty, indignity, undue humiliation, hardship, or oppression, or the deprivation or abridgement of any right." [Underscoring supplied.]

This definition varied from that cited in the statute prohibiting hazing (10 U.S.C. 6964) by the addition of the underscored word.

The Naval Academy's instruction on fourth class indoctrination stated

> "Plebe year, including plebe summer, is not an 'initiation' into the service. . . . Training should be rigorous, both physically and mentally, however, there is a clear boundary between military discipline and harassment that the Commandant of Midshipmen trusts each midshipman to observe."

The instruction, however, did little to specify where that boundary was. While the instruction went into several topics in great detail, devoting over three pages to laundry-marking instructions, one and a half pages to foot care and shoe break-in procedures, and one and two thirds pages to telephone procedures, it contained few details on what constituted improper indoctrination or hazing.

The instruction also stated that

> "The relationship between first (or second) and fourth class is a professional one, based on the common tenets of human dignity and mutual respect. . . . Any act which may tend to degrade or humiliate any midshipman, whether upper-class or fourth class, is in violation of these principles and goals."

In specific terms, however, the only clarifications consisted of prohibitions against (1) imposing unit runs for punishment, (2) requiring more than 10 push-ups at a time or more than 80 in 1 day, (3) imposing "physical punishment" during Extra Military Instruction periods,[1] and (4) requiring a midshipman to consume any portion of his meal in an unusual or degrading manner, or against his will.

A team of investigators from the Navy Inspector General's office concluded that the definition of hazing was not well understood by the midshipmen. After the definition of hazing was explained to them, 17 percent of the midshipmen interviewed by the team stated that they were aware of incidents that appeared to meet the definition of hazing.

Hazing-Type Offenses Were Usually Charged as Lesser Offenses

Naval Academy regulations identify two categories of hazing-related offenses. The most serious category is defined merely as "repeated hazing" and refers to the law that makes it punishable by dismissal from the Academy. A second category is a lesser charge described as "abuse of the Fourth Class Indoctrination System through unauthorized use of physical contact, ordering performance of personal services, or humiliation of fourth classmen."

In mid-1990, at the request of the Secretary of the Navy in response to several highly publicized incidents, the Navy Inspector General conducted a climate assessment of the Naval Academy. The Inspector General's team reported that it was unable to determine the extent of hazing at the Naval Academy. Using records of conduct system cases, the team found that from 1986 through 1990 there had been no convictions for "repeated hazing," while there were 15 convictions for the less serious charge of violation of fourth class indoctrination system regulations. In reviewing these lesser charge cases, the team concluded that many of them appeared to meet the definition of hazing and would be labeled as such by the general public and Members of Congress. The Navy Inspector General concluded that by not labeling applicable cases as hazing, the Academy risked being perceived by both midshipmen and the public as downplaying the seriousness of hazing incidents.

A July 1990 DOD Inspector General investigation into a case of alleged hazing at the Naval Academy concluded that the case did involve hazing.

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[1] Periods of time set aside in the midshipman schedule for providing plebes with additional instruction regarding such issues as duties, proper uniforms, procedures, and fourth class knowledge.

The DOD investigator reported that the Naval Academy investigator's conclusion that the incident was an Army-Navy week prank that went too far was

> "not wrong from a factual point of view, but his conclusion that the incident was not hazing was incorrect, and may reflect an institutional insensitivity to the kind of treatment that should be unacceptable when meted out to classmates by future officers of the United States Navy."

We found two cases in the 1989 plebe summer period where the individual was originally found guilty of the separation-level offense of "repeated hazing" by the investigating officer but later had the charges reduced by the commandant:

- A first class midshipman was found to have required a fourth classman to eat a portion of his meal in a sexually suggestive manner and, on a separate occasion, required the same fourth classman to stand on his chair in the dining room, bend over, and squeal like a pig. The first classman also made public remarks on these occasions questioning the fourth classman's sexual orientation. The officer assigned to conduct the investigative hearing concluded that these improper orders exposed the fourth classman to an excessive degree of cruelty, indignity, and humiliation, and found the first classman guilty of "repeated hazing." Although confirming the investigating officer's findings of fact, the commandant changed the offense to a lower level charge, "abuse of the fourth class indoctrination system." The record contains no explanation of why the commandant reduced the charge.
- A first class midshipman required a fourth classman to stand at attention near a wall. Tape was looped around the front of the plebe's head and attached to the wall on both sides of his head. The first classman's explanation was that the tape was intended as an instructional technique to assist the plebe in learning the proper position of attention. The first classman also required that fourth classman to repeat self-demeaning statements. The commandant overruled the "guilty" judgment rendered by the officer who conducted the investigative hearing, but the record contains no explanation of the reason for reversing the guilty findings. The commandant imposed no punishment on the first classman, but placed him on conduct probation until his graduation.

The tendency to avoid use of the "hazing" label can also be seen in the following case from plebe summer 1990:

- A first class midshipman was conducting a room inspection of a plebe who he had heard wanted to leave the Academy. He asked the plebe why he wanted to leave. After asking for and receiving permission to speak freely, the plebe told the first classman that he wanted to leave because of behavior like his. At that point the first classman began to shout, and he pushed a desk out of position, threw a chair across the room (damaging a bed), slammed closet doors, knocked down two closet shelves, and slammed a shelf down on a desk. He was charged and found guilty of a 5000 level offense (which is the second most serious level of offense), "failure to maintain a professional relationship with a fourth class midshipman."

Naval Academy Has Made Recent Attempts to Control Hazing

In the spring of 1990, several Naval Academy incidents described in the media as hazing or harassment received widespread publicity. On May 26, 1990, the Superintendent of the Naval Academy issued General Order No. 1-90, implemented by the following regulations:

> "a. Touching of fourth-class midshipmen with hand or any other object by an upperclassman for any reason other than for their own safety will be strictly prohibited. Any action to circumvent this rule such as inducing another fourth-class midshipman to touch his classmate will be considered an equal act. Violation of this rule will be considered a separation level offense. The one exception to this rule will be the incidental contact during approved athletic contests in the athletic environment.
>
> "b. No midshipman will touch, grab, punch, or push another midshipman who has verbally or through other means expressed his or her objection to the activity. Violation of this rule will be considered a separation level offense. The one exception to this rule will be the incidental contact during approved athletic contests in the athletic environment."

On July 13, 1990, the Commandant of Midshipman issued a memorandum on the Naval Academy's policy regarding hazing, which was incorporated into the midshipman regulations a month later. The memorandum quoted the statutory prohibition against hazing and spelled out in some detail the terms used in the statute. The prohibitions included in the memorandum were:

> "a. Cruelty. The cruelty is not specified narrowly as being only physical in nature. The essence of cruelty is the intent to hurt another—to inflict pain—whether physically, psychologically or otherwise.
>
> "b. Indignity. Every midshipman is entitled to be treated in all circumstances as a human being who has significant value. His or her human dignity is not to be degraded.

"c. Humiliation. Some individuals may feel some sense of humiliation in every failure. While the prohibition does not extend that far, it does extend to acts intended to fundamentally debase a midshipman in the opinion of self or others.

"d. Hardship or oppression. Tasking must take into account the total load with which the subordinate is encumbered. If tasking is within the structure of the published plebe indoctrination system, hazing is not at issue. If it is arbitrary—not part of the structure—it may be hazing, especially if it has serious negative consequences in the academic or other realms.

"e. Deprivation or abridgement of any right. All midshipmen, but especially plebes, yield certain rights as a result of their status at the Naval Academy. These limits are permissible and are spelled out in policies and regulations. Individual midshipmen, however, may not further limit the rights of other midshipmen without explicit authorization."

The memorandum also established the following principles to guide midshipmen in the exercise of authority over other midshipmen: (1) midshipmen should be led as enlisted sailors and marines would be reasonably and lawfully led; (2) plebe indoctrination should emulate the positive, instructional aspects of boot camp and take a long-term perspective; and (3) midshipmen should not presume that it is their job to "weed out" plebes who will not perform well in combat or those who cannot handle the stress of a professional military regimen. The memorandum noted that hazing was not limited to the traditional form of hazing directed at plebes or more junior midshipmen. Rather, hazing could occur among peers or even be committed by subordinates against more senior midshipmen.

The Naval Academy made additional changes to its fourth class indoctrination system for the 1991-92 academic year. Among the key changes were (1) extensive training of the upperclassmen and officers in charge of plebe summer, (2) an increased emphasis on positive leadership behaviors, (3) a 10-day moratorium at the start of the academic year insulating plebes from upperclassmen who were not part of the plebe summer detail to allow time for the plebe summer staff to demonstrate appropriate behaviors, (4) a reduction in the amount of "pro-book" material that plebes were required to know,[2] and (5) identification of specific leadership development roles for all four classes. The 1991-92 fourth class indoctrination instruction contains more specifics aimed at defining appropriate and inappropriate plebe treatment.

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[2] The "pro book" is the reference manual containing the professional knowledge that fourth class midshipmen are required to learn.

Hazing-Type Treatment Appears to Have Been Reduced, but Some Forms Remain

There is some indication that the recent changes to the Naval Academy's fourth class system have had a positive effect on plebe performance. The officer in charge of the Naval Academy plebe indoctrination program told us that the most recent plebe class at the time (the Class of 1995) showed very high levels of motivation and performance. The class set records in small arms qualification, close order drill, and the number of midshipmen passing course validation examinations.[3] Also, plebe summer attrition was significantly lower than it had been in the past.

Our questionnaire was administered at the Naval Academy in late November 1990, after the first round of new regulations had been in place for several months, but before the additional 1991-92 changes were made. The results of our survey also appear to indicate that the Naval Academy's efforts to eliminate hazing have had some success. Figure 2.1 shows the percent of midshipmen in each of the four classes indicating that they personally experienced particular types of treatment "a couple of times a month" or more often during their fourth class year.[4] This figure also shows the responses of the Company Officers (CO) and Battalion Officers,[5] who were asked how often the typical plebe was subjected to the various types of fourth class treatment, before the entrance of the summer of 1990. In general, their views are similar to the recalled experiences of the upperclassmen.

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[3] "Validation" refers to the process of placing out of a required course by obtaining high scores on examinations on the particular subject matter.

[4] Since our data was collected at a single point in time, the responses of the upperclass midshipmen represent their recollections of a period from 1 to 3 years earlier, and the fourth class midshipmen's responses are based on only a partial year's experience.

[5] Company officers are commissioned officers who oversee the 36 companies. Battalion officers are commissioned officers who oversee the six battalions, each composed of six companies.

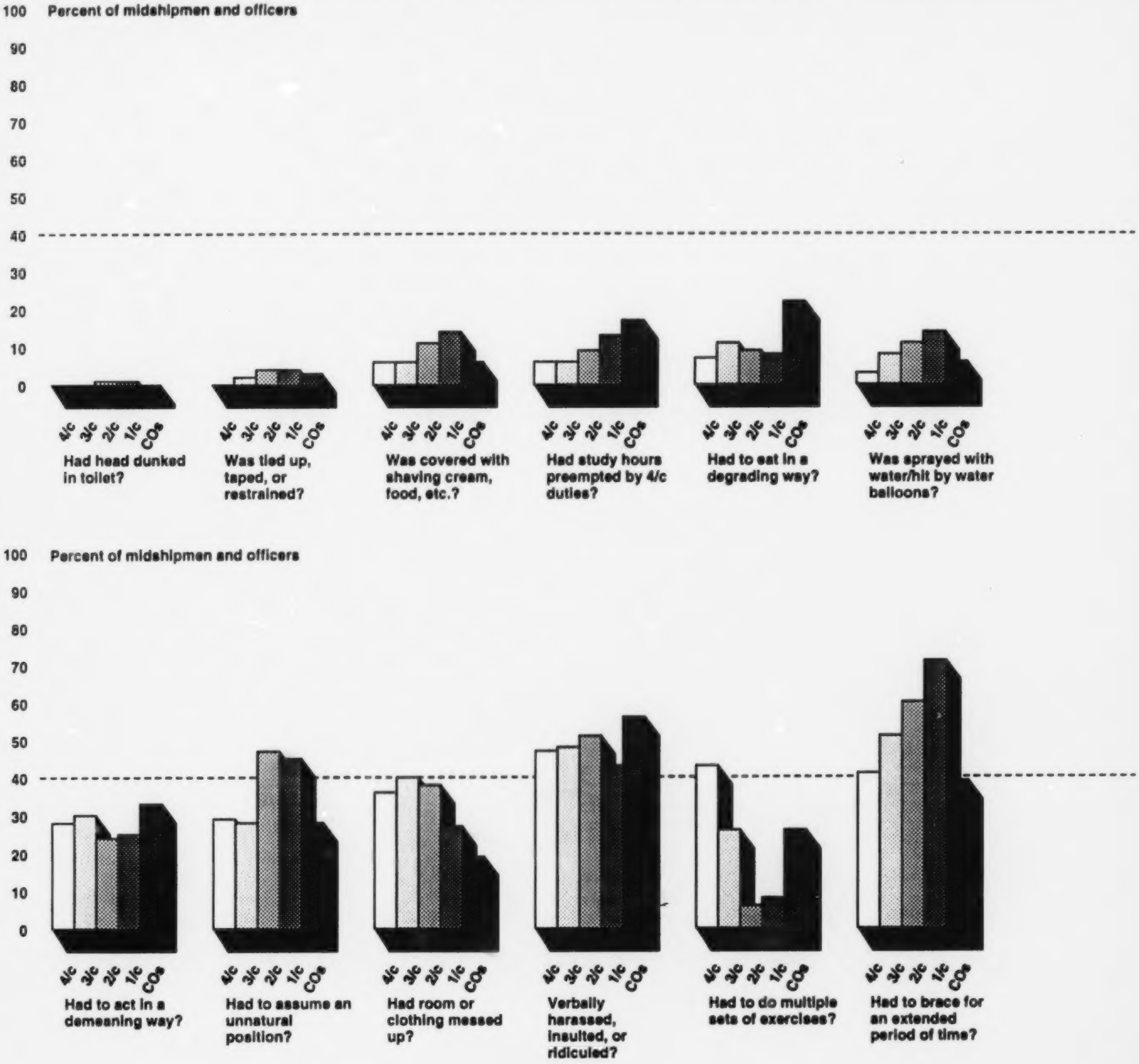

Figure 2.1: Hazing-Type Treatment Cited by Naval Academy Midshipmen as Occurring a Couple of Times a Month or More

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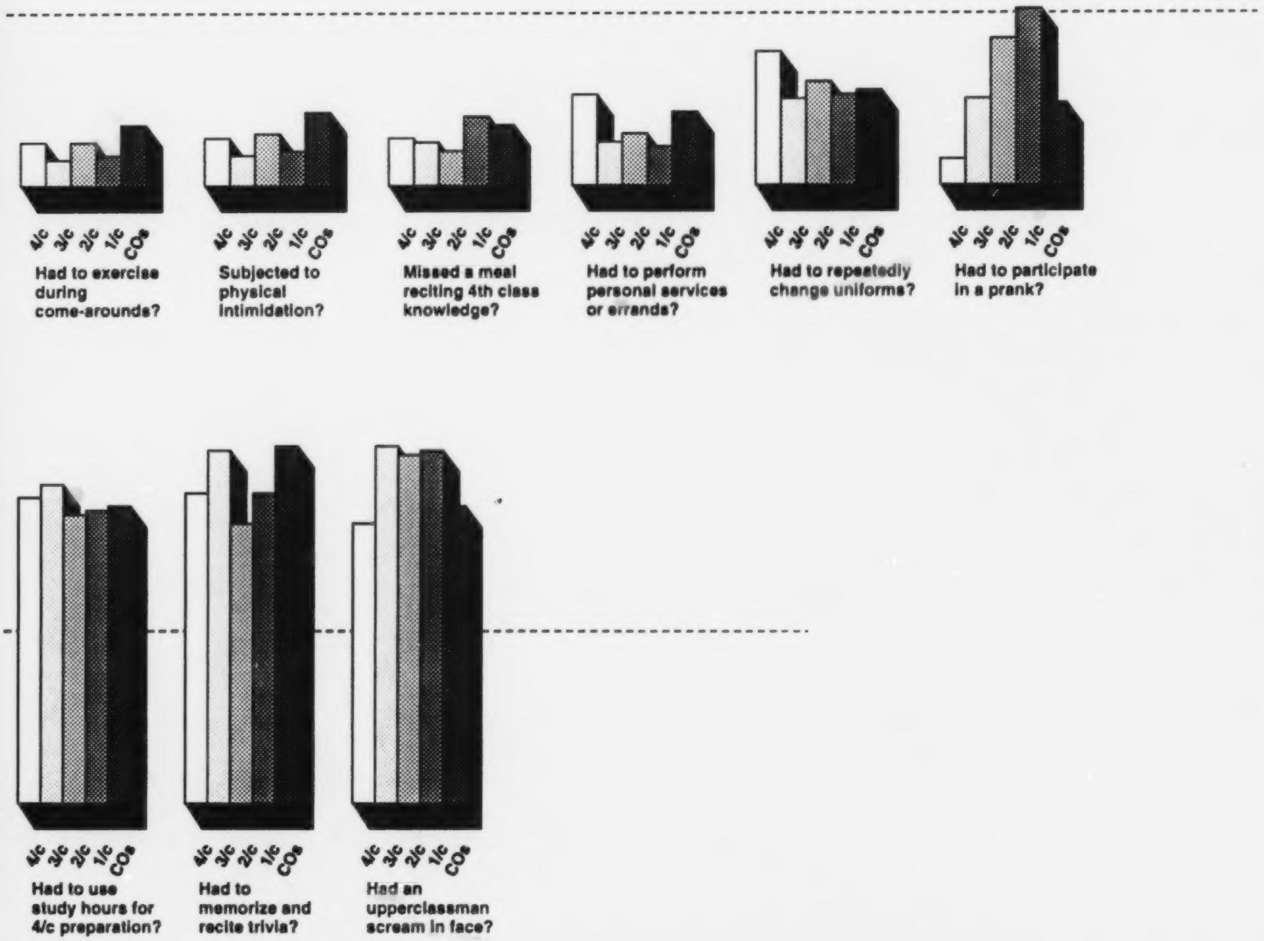

Note: Company and Battalion Officer responses refer to the frequency they estimate the average plebe experienced such treatment prior to the 1990-91 academic year.

Source: Responses to GAO questionnaire.

The fourth class midshipmen reported a lower frequency than the upperclass midshipmen of

- having to participate in a prank,
- being covered with some kind of substance,
- having study hours preempted by fourth class duties,
- having to brace[6] for an extended period of time,
- having to assume an unnatural position,
- being sprayed with water, and
- having an upperclassman scream in their face.

These results could mean that the Navy's crackdown on hazing activities has been effective in reducing inappropriate treatment of plebes. While fourth class midshipmen reported a higher frequency of having to repeatedly change uniforms, this activity is specifically cited as permissible in the fourth class indoctrination instruction. We found no indication that specific subgroups, such as women or minorities, received more hazing-type treatment than others.

In some areas, there was no improvement. The fourth class midshipmen reported a higher frequency of having to do multiple sets of exercises and having to perform personal services or errands. In addition, certain kinds of hazing-type treatment appear to continue at a relatively high frequency of occurrence. For example, 40 percent or more of the fourth class midshipmen reported that they had to

- memorize and recite trivia,
- do multiple sets of exercises,
- endure verbal harassment and insults,
- use study hours to prepare for their fourth class duties,
- brace for an extended time, and
- endure an upperclassman screaming in their face.

The recent changes in the fourth class system appear to have clarified the distinction between hazing and legitimate fourth class indoctrination among the commandant's staff. Our questionnaire asked the company and battalion officers whether each type of treatment was a violation of the regulations before and since the 1990 changes. The new rules have increased the consensus among the officers regarding the kind of treatment that is allowed. The average percentage of officers agreeing that a practice was within or against the rules increased from about 65 percent to about 83 percent.

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[6] "Brace" refers to an exaggerated position of attention.

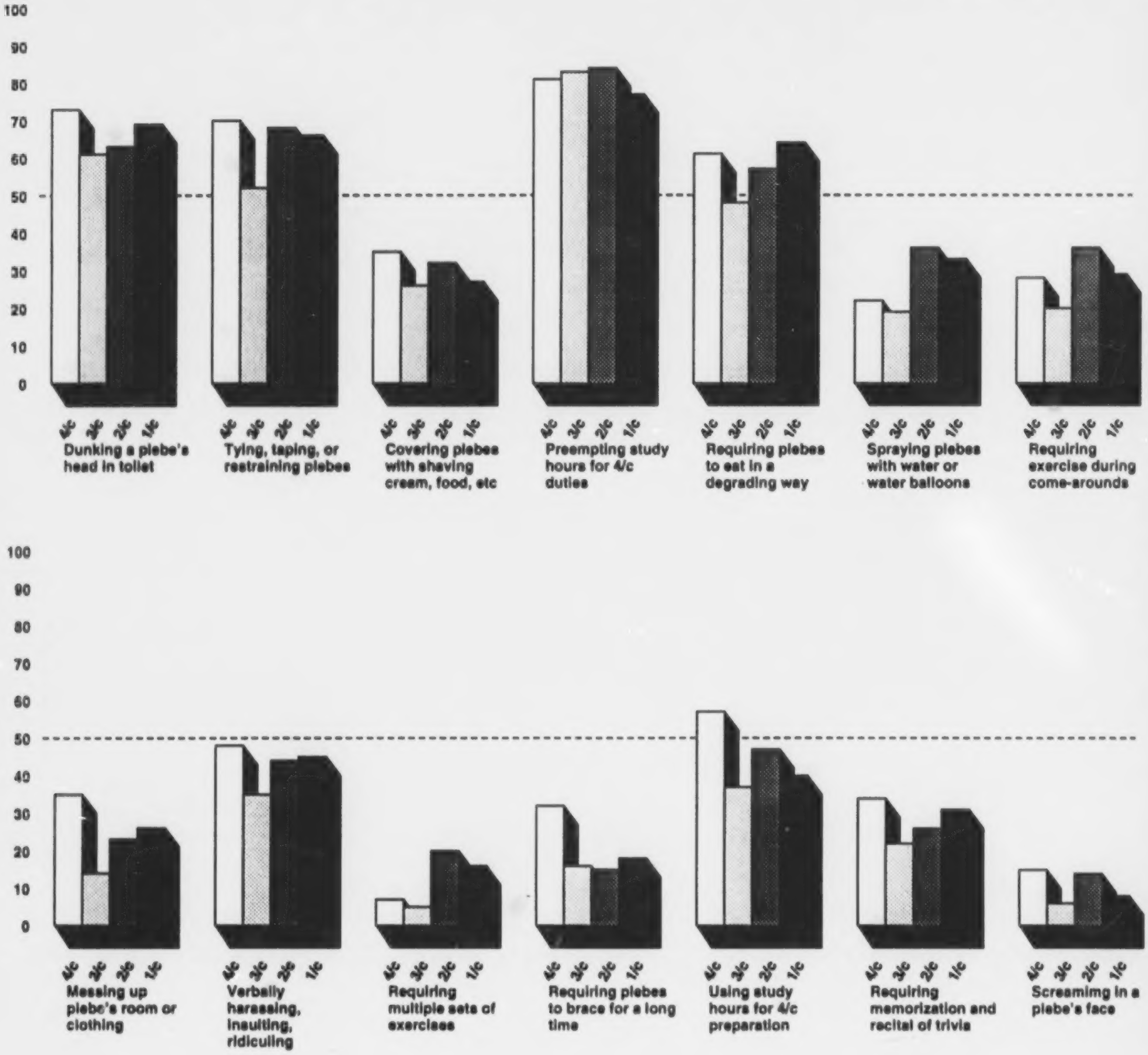
Midshipmen's Views on Hazing Vary According to Class

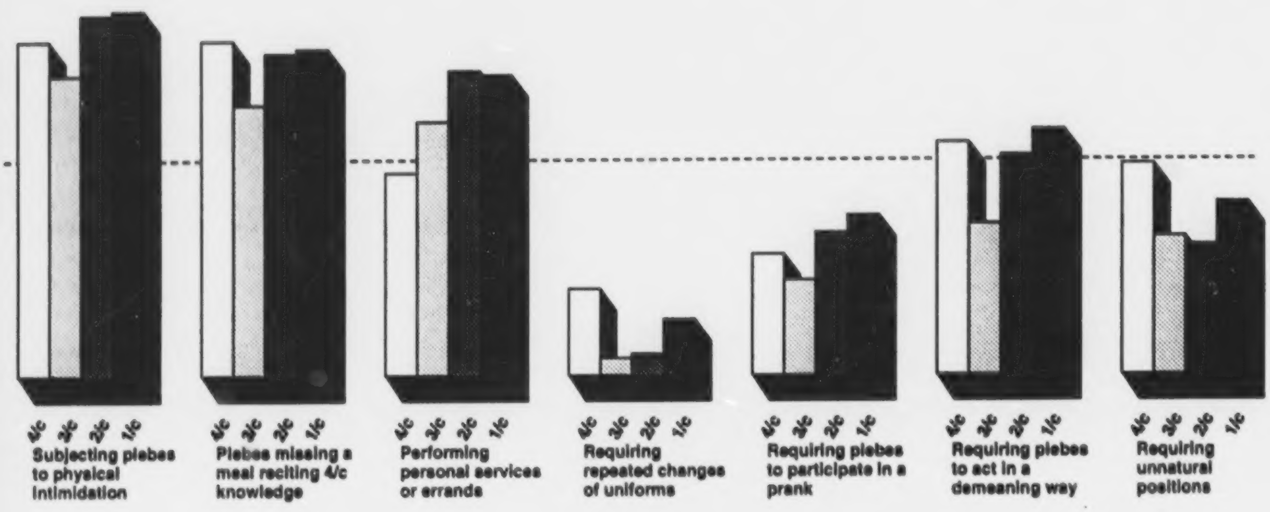
In the fall of 1990, what constituted hazing was still unclear to a sizeable number of midshipmen. About one-third of the midshipmen we surveyed either agreed or strongly agreed that the distinction between allowable fourth class indoctrination and hazing was not clear to them. The distinction was least clear to third and fourth class midshipmen.

Midshipmen were asked, regardless of whether they experienced a given type of treatment, to indicate whether each type of treatment should or should not be allowed to occur at the Naval Academy. Figure 2.2 shows the midshipmen's responses by class.

In general, fourth class midshipmen were the least permissive of the classes regarding whether specific practices ought to be allowed; third class midshipmen appeared to be the most permissive. Eleven of the 21 practices were seen as inappropriate by 40 percent or more of the fourth class midshipmen. The practices seen as inappropriate by the most midshipmen were having to use study hours to perform fourth class duties, having to miss a meal to recite fourth class knowledge, and being subjected to physical intimidation.

Figure 2.2: Percentage of Naval Academy Midshipmen Indicating that Specific Hazing-Type Activities Should Not Be Allowed





Source: Responses to GAO questionnaire.

Agency Comments

DOD indicated that it believes changes made to the fourth class system after we surveyed the midshipmen have further reduced the incidence of hazing-type treatment at the Naval Academy.

Treatment of Fourth Class Cadets at the Air Force Academy

The U.S. Air Force Academy, the youngest of the three DOD academies, was established in 1954 at Lowery Air Force Base in Denver, Colorado. In 1958, the Academy moved to its present location near Colorado Springs, Colorado. During academic year 1990-91, about 4,354 cadets attended the Academy. Included in that number were 1,283 members of the fourth class (the Class of 1994).

Fourth class life at the Air Force Academy is intended to be demanding and stressful. The distinction between some traditional elements of the fourth class system and hazing is not always clear. Few cases of hazing or related offenses have been reported to officials, and the offenders in the reported cases were all retained. The frequency of hazing-type treatment appears to have been fairly stable over the past 4 years, with a significant proportion of cadets indicating that they had been subjected to various forms of hazing-type treatment.

Traditional Elements of Fourth Class Life at the Air Force Academy

The first year at the Air Force Academy is designed to be a time of intense indoctrination and serves as a demanding transition from civilian to military life. The training is intended to be rigorous to test and strengthen the cadet's motivation and capabilities, and is deliberately designed to be arduous and challenging.

The system seeks to instill obedience to authority, stating that the ability to command presupposes the ability to follow. From the moment of arrival, the new cadet is immediately placed in a subordinate-superior relationship with upperclassmen. Training takes place in a totally regimented environment in which physical and mental pressures are deliberately applied and cadets are continually subjected to rigorous discipline and direct observation. The new cadet learns instantaneous obedience, attention to detail, punctuality, and the foundations of the military profession.

The stated objectives of the fourth class system are to help the fourth class cadet develop

- knowledge of the customs, traditions, and heritage of the Air Force and the Academy;
- discipline and a sense of duty, honor, and ethics;
- the mental and physical habit patterns that will be called upon later in a military profession;
- respect for authority, subordinates, and self;

- a sense of unity, teamwork, and class identity;
- effective time management skills through a system of prescribed duties;
- an understanding of proper superior-subordinate relationships; and
- a sense of accomplishment and self-confidence that will enable each fourth class cadet to function in a demanding environment.

The Fourth Class Training System Manual tells fourth class cadets that the training they receive is directed toward making them effective members of the Air Force and is not intended to be personally demeaning or insulting. It also states that each cadet is expected to exhibit dignity in his or her role as a cadet, whether follower or leader.

Upperclassmen are told that their paramount duty is to train, not harass; motivate, not discourage; and set the example that will encourage maximum performance from the fourth class cadets. Furthermore, the manual states that upperclassmen will not attack a person's dignity by harassment, hazing, or ridicule. Training, while intensive, is to be meaningful and constructive.

Behavior during fourth class year is highly structured. For example, according to the Fourth Class Training System Manual, new cadets are to use only the following responses when being questioned by an upperclass cadet or officer:

- "Yes, Sir/Ma'am";
- "No, Sir/Ma'am";
- "No excuse, Sir/Ma'am";
- "Sir/Ma'am, may I make a statement?";
- "Sir/Ma'am, may I ask a question?";
- "Sir/Ma'am, I do not understand"; or
- "Sir/Ma'am, I will find out."

Fourth class cadets are required to attend at least one varsity intercollegiate athletic contest at the Academy each week, in addition to their mandatory attendance at football games. Fourth class cadets are also required to proceed across the compound at "double-time."[1]

To develop a sense of accomplishment and pride in the Air Force and the Academy, fourth class cadets are required to learn specific professional items verbatim, which according to the Fourth Class Training System

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[1] "Double-time" is defined in the Fourth Class Training System manual as "an easy run, taking 180 steps (36 inches in length) per minute."

Manual "have carry-over application into later performance as an upperclass cadet and an Air Force officer." Basic knowledge that is required to be memorized by the morning meal formation includes the current date, the Officer in Charge, the Cadet Senior Officer of the Day, the next Air Force historical day, and number of days until graduation for each class. In addition, fourth class cadets are required to be familiar with information, such as movies, varsity athletic events and players' names, and cultural and other special events. The rationale given for this rote knowledge requirement is that it is similar to procedures that must be memorized exactly as written by aircrew members to prepare them for aircraft emergencies.

Mealtimes at the Academy are one of the most structured situations. The Fourth Class Training System Manual identifies various table positions, such as "Loadmaster," "Cold Pilot," and "Hot Pilot," with very specific descriptions of duties and protocol. Examples of requirements are "All glasses will be filled to within 1/2 inch from the top"; "No one will touch the upper 1/3 of each glass"; and "The first basic cadet to receive dessert takes one bite and fills out the USAFA [U.S. Air Force Academy] Form 0-96, Cadet Food Acceptability Report."

Until about midway through their fourth class year, cadets must eat seated "at attention." The Fourth Class Training System Manual states:

> "When sitting at attention in the Cadet Dining Hall, a basic cadet will assume the following posture: (a) Feet together and flat on the floor. (b) Legs bent at the knees, forming a 90 degree angle. (c) Hands placed palms down resting on the thighs under the table. (d) Back straight and parallel to back of chair. Sit erect so that the back does not touch the top of the chair. (e) Elbows against sides. (f) Head is kept erect and is held squarely to the front with chin drawn in. Eyes are kept to the front."

Corrections to table duties and table decorum can be made until the end of the meal. The table commandant is responsible for ensuring that cadets have the opportunity to eat a full meal.

Regulations Prohibit Hazing and Related Offenses

Cadet Wing Regulation 537-6 prescribes standards of personal and professional conduct applying to all cadets. This regulation defines hazing as

> "any unauthorized assumption of authority by one cadet over another cadet, whereby the latter shall suffer or may be exposed to suffering any cruelty, indignity, humiliation, hardship or oppression, or the deprivation or abridgement of any right, privilege, or advantage of which he or she shall be legally or properly entitled."

The regulation notes that violation can result in dismissal.

Cadet Wing Regulation 111-1 identifies several types of disciplinary infractions, some of which are related to hazing. Among the infractions prohibited by this regulation are mistreatment of subordinates within the chain of command and correcting underclassmen in a harsh, disrespectful, or abusive manner. For offenses of low severity, the mistreatment charge carries a penalty of 5 demerits, 2 hours of marching or 2 hours of confinement to quarters, and possible restrictions. The inappropriate corrections charge carries a penalty of 10 demerits, 10 tours/confinements, and possible restrictions.

No Recent Major Reviews or Changes to the Fourth Class System

Air Force Academy officials told us that no specific studies had been conducted recently regarding the fourth class system. These officials told us that they review the system every year and make adjustments as needed. They could not recall any major changes made to the system in recent years.

Few Cases of Hazing or Related Offenses Have Been Charged

For the 3-year academic period from the fall of 1987 through the spring of 1990, there were 146 Commandant Disciplinary Board cases and 47 Military Review Committee cases. In our review of these cases, we identified nine that appeared to be hazing-related.

Examples of these nine cases are as follows:

- In a 1987 case, a first class cadet was charged with conduct unbecoming an officer candidate for striking a fourth class cadet. He received a punishment of 60 demerits, 120 hours of marching, 6 months of restriction, was placed on probation, and was given an Article 15.[2]
- In a 1990 case, two third class cadets entered the room of a fourth class cadet, poured rubbing alcohol on both sides of the bathroom valet, and set it on fire. They yelled that the room was on fire to ensure that all occupants of the room were awake. The fourth class cadet awoke, extinguished the fire, and proceeded into the hall where one of the third class cadets sprayed him with whipped cream. The third class cadets were charged with arson (violation of Uniform Code of Military Justice Article 126) and

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[2] An Article 15 is a nonjudicial punishment administered under the authority of the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

received punishments of 30 demerits, 40 hours of marching, 2 months of restriction, and were ordered to pay for the damage.

The offending cadets in all nine cases were retained at the Academy.

The Frequency of Hazing-Type Treatment Appears Stable Over the Recent Past

Figure 3.1 shows the percentage of cadets in each of the four classes who indicated in response to our questionnaire that they personally experienced particular types of treatment at least a couple of times a month during their fourth class year.[3] This figure also shows the responses of the Air Officers Commanding (AOC) and Group AOCs, who were asked to indicate how often they believed a typical cadet was exposed to the various type of fourth class treatment before the summer of 1990.[4]

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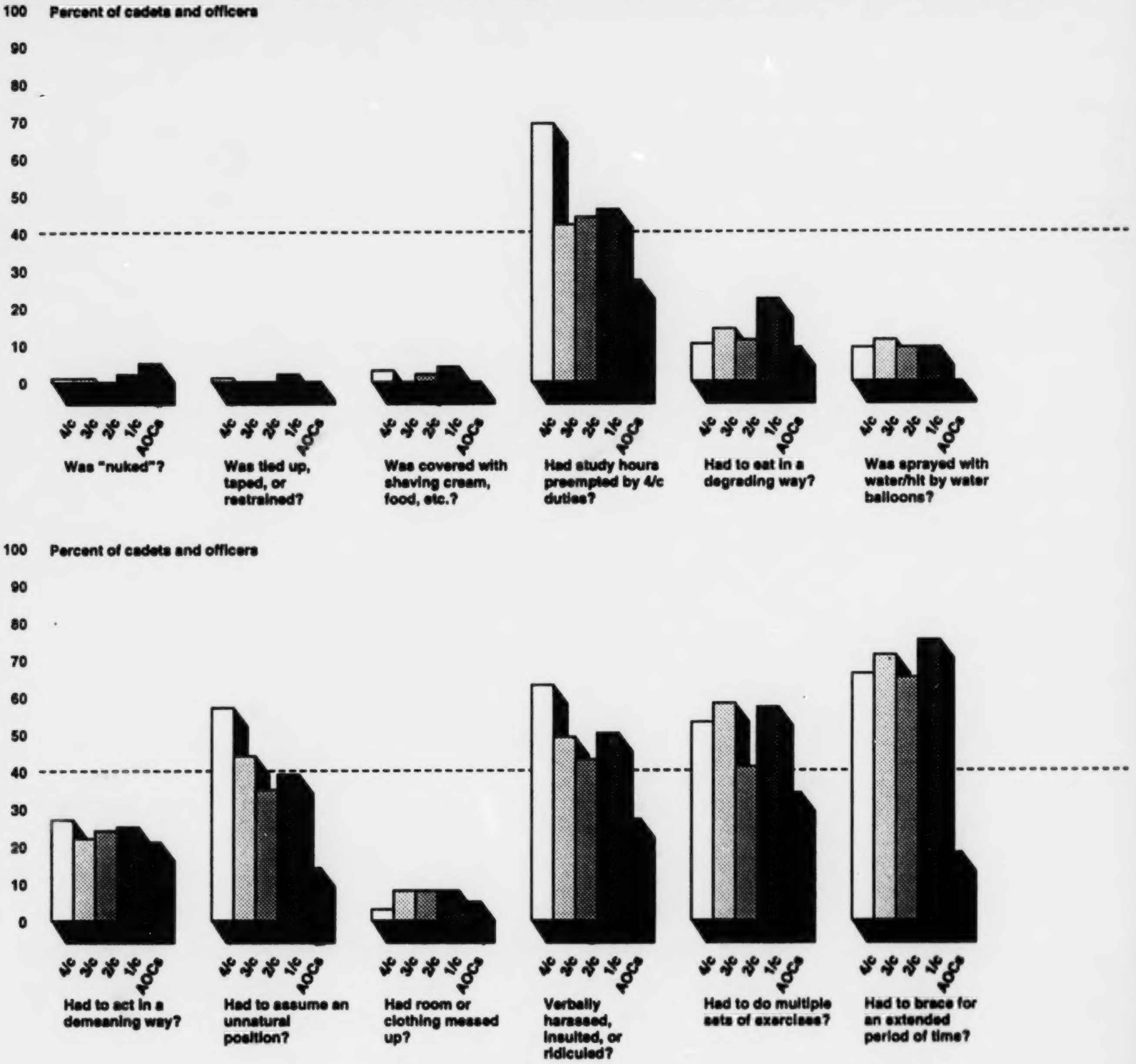
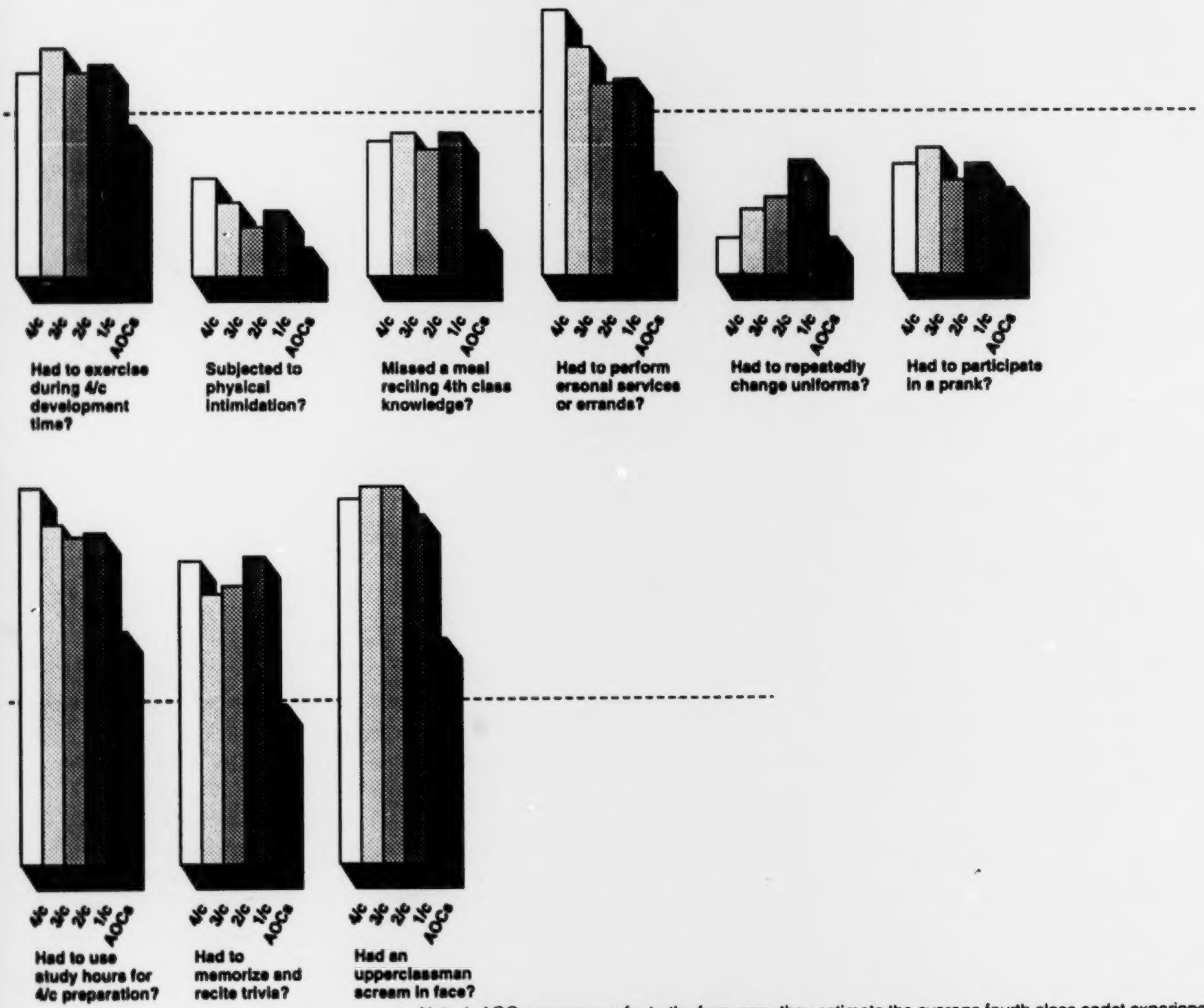
[3] Since our data was collected in early 1991, the responses of the upperclassmen represent their recollections of a period from 1 to 3 years earlier while the fourth class cadets' responses are based on only a partial year's experience.

[4] AOCs are the commissioned officers who oversee the 40 cadet squadrons. Group AOCs are the commissioned officers who oversee the 4 groups, each composed of 10 squadrons.

Figure 3.1: Hazing-Type Treatment Cited by Air Force Academy Cadets as Occurring a Couple of Times a Month or More





Note 1. AOC responses refer to the frequency they estimate the average fourth class cadet experienced such treatment prior to the 1990-91 academic year.

Note 2. "Nuked" refers to a tradition where a cadet is covered with some kind of substance or subjected to some other prank on his or her birthday.

Source: Responses to GAO questionnaire.

Hazing-type treatment appears to be relatively common at the Air Force Academy. Forty percent or more of the fourth class cadets indicated that they had been subjected to 10 of the 21 types of fourth class treatment at least a couple of times a month. The types of behavior they were most frequently subjected to were having to

- use study hours for fourth class preparation or duties;
- endure verbal harassment, insults, or screaming;
- memorize and recite trivia;
- perform personal services or errands for upperclassmen;
- brace for an extended period of time;
- assume an unnatural position;
- do multiple sets of exercises; and
- exercise during fourth class development time.

It appears that the level of hazing-type treatment has been fairly stable across the four classes, with a slight pattern of higher levels being reported by the most recent class. There were no indications that specific subgroups (such as women; members of racial, ethnic, or religious minorities; or athletes) were subject to any more or less hazing-type treatment than others.

The questionnaire responses of the AOCs and Group AOCs showed recognition that hazing-type treatment was fairly common. One-quarter or more of these officers indicated that the typical fourth class cadet was subject to 8 of the 21 types of treatment at least a couple of times a month.

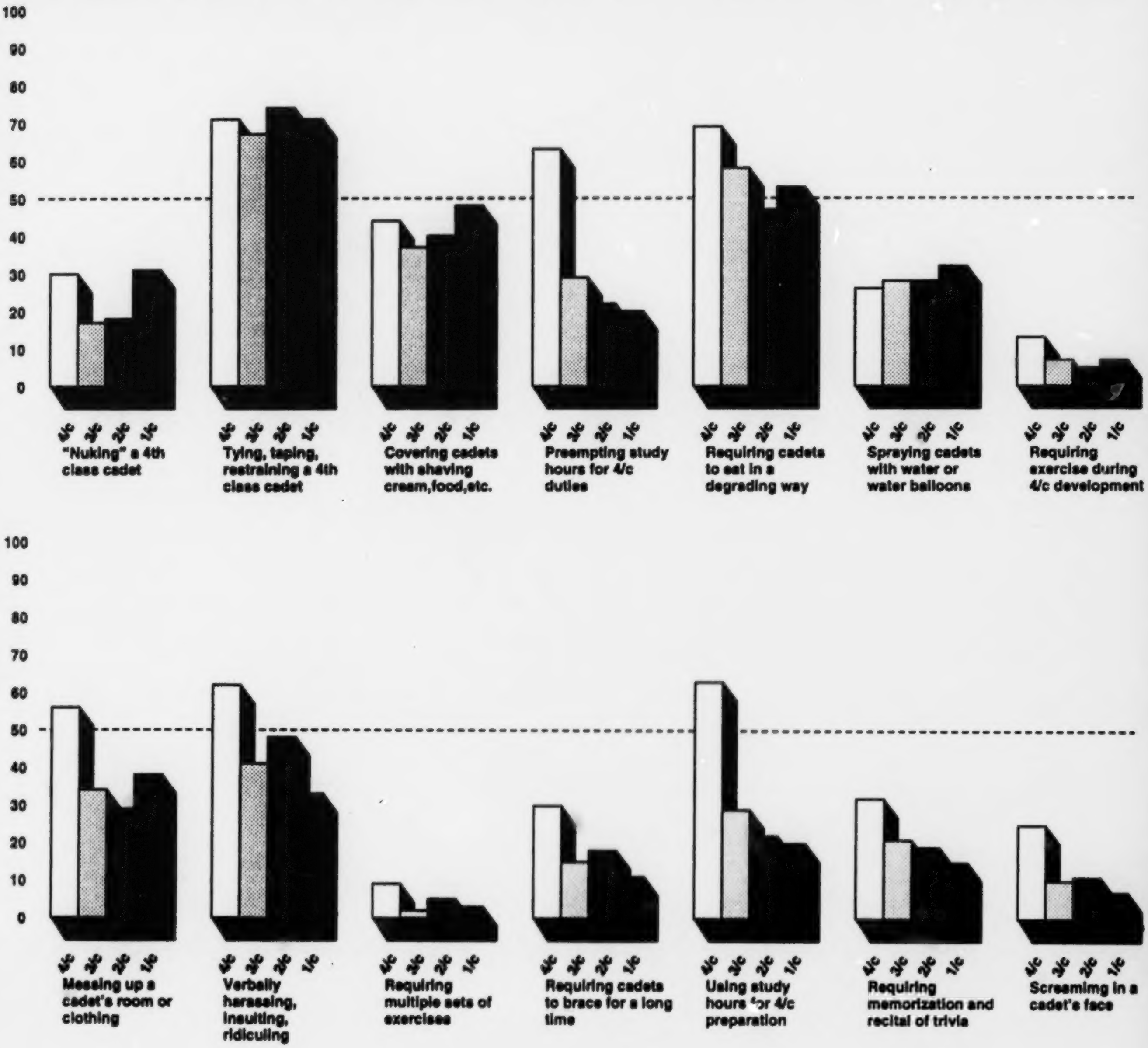
We also asked the AOCs and Group AOCs whether each of the 21 types of treatment were against current regulations. For 12 of the 21 types of treatment, 70 percent or more of the AOCs and Group AOCs responded that such treatment was against current regulations. With regard to the other 9 types of treatment, the percentage of officers indicating they were against regulations ranged from 26 to 58. This disparity could indicate some confusion among AOCs regarding what kinds of treatment are allowed. Overall, the percentage of AOCs agreeing that a particular type of treatment is or is not allowed averaged about 73 percent. This is 10 percentage points lower than the Naval Academy and 21 points lower than the Military Academy. The higher agreement at the other two academies could be the result of the clarity brought about by recent major changes to their fourth class systems.

Cadet Views on Hazing Vary by Class

Some confusion regarding what is allowed appeared to exist among the cadets. Overall, 41 percent of the cadets (including 55 percent of the fourth class cadets, 42 percent of the third class, 33 percent of the second class, and 31 percent of the first class) indicated that the distinction between allowable fourth class indoctrination and hazing was not clear to them.

Figure 3.2 shows cadet responses regarding whether the various types of treatment should be allowed. Forty percent or more of the fourth class cadets indicated that 11 of the 21 types of treatment should not be allowed at the Academy. The upperclassmen were generally more permissive with regard to what kinds of activities should be allowed.

Figure 3.2: Percentage of Air Force Academy Cadets Indicating That Specific Hazing-Type Activities Should Not Be Allowed



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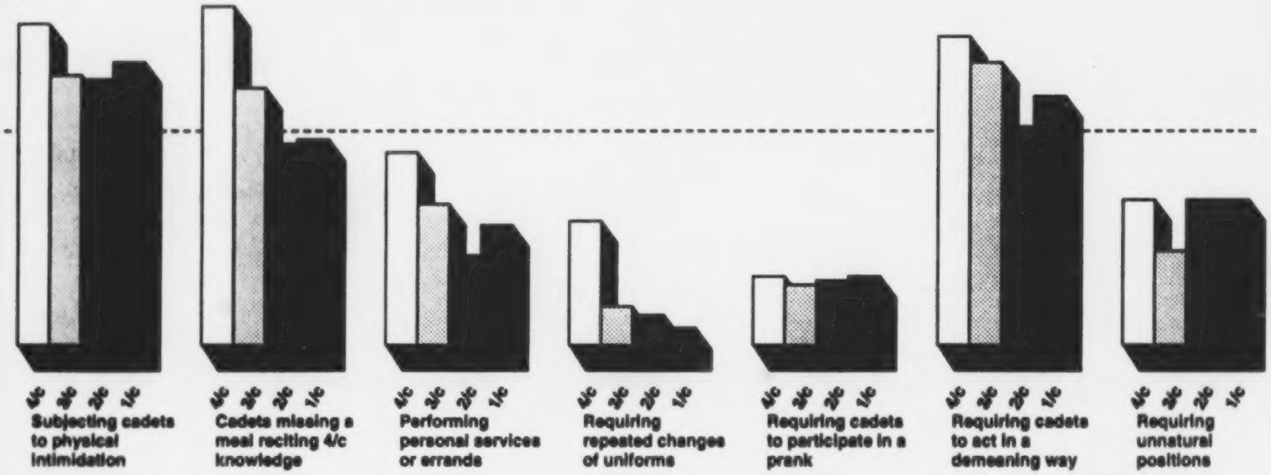

Source: Responses to GAO questionnaire.

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

DOD stated that the Air Force Academy annually reviews its fourth class system and that the results of those annual reviews were no less significant than those of reviews conducted at the other academies. DOD cited several changes that occurred at the Air Force Academy over the past 2 years as a result of those annual reviews: (1) a reduction of fourth class training hours by more than 50 percent, (2) a shift of training responsibility of third class cadets from unsupervised to supervised roles, and (3) the implementation of new regulations, such as restricting fourth class training to the first 10 minutes of each meal.

We acknowledge that the Air Force Academy has routinely reviewed its fourth class system. The other academies also conducted such annual internal reviews and made incremental changes on the basis of those reviews. However, the data indicated that there was a dramatic drop in hazing-type treatment at the Military and Naval academies in the year following their more extensive reviews and overhaul of their fourth class systems. At the Air Force Academy, however, there was no discernible drop in the frequency of hazing-type treatment and in several areas there was an increase.

Chapter 4

Treatment of Fourth Class Cadets at the Military Academy

The U.S. Military Academy, the oldest of the three DOD academies, was established in 1802 at West Point, New York. During academic year 1990-91, about 4,296 cadets attended the Academy. Included in that number were 1,190 members of the fourth class (the Class of 1994).

Fourth class year is designed to be a demanding and intense introduction into the military and life at the Military Academy. The traditional fourth class system placed plebes under a great deal of stress. When upperclassmen have overstepped the bounds of authorized plebe treatment, they have usually been charged with a lesser offense than hazing. In 1990, the Military Academy overhauled its fourth class system. Hazing-type treatment appears to have been reduced as a result of these changes. However, some forms of hazing-type treatment continue.

Traditional Elements of Fourth Class Life at the Military Academy

According to the West Point Association of Graduates, the fourth class system originated in the mid-19th century as an informal fraternity initiation rite. The Academy administration adopted the system and codified it to curb abuses in the treatment of plebes. Over the years, the system evolved into a primary vehicle for leader development.

Until 1990, the stated objectives of the Military Academy's fourth class system were to enhance the leadership development of upperclassmen and provide fourth class cadets the opportunity to learn and perform duties in a demanding, challenging, and intense environment. It was also intended to develop (1) pride in being a part of West Point and Army customs and traditions; (2) a firm foundation for understanding the military profession; (3) a sense of accomplishment and self-confidence; (4) discipline and an unyielding sense of duty; (5) a sense of unity, teamwork, and class identity; (6) effective time management skills; (7) an appreciation of the problems and perspectives of subordinates; and (8) an understanding of and appreciation for proper senior-subordinate relationships.

Traditional fourth class life at West Point was highly regimented. For example, while inside the Academy's buildings, fourth class cadets were expected to walk in a military manner, 120 steps per minute, with head and eyes to the front, an arm swing 9 inches to the front and 6 inches to the rear, as in marching. In buildings, they were to walk close to the walls and yield the right-of-way to allow an upperclassman or officer to pass. Except while performing official duties, fourth class cadets were not allowed to talk to a classmate while in the halls or stairways without first obtaining permission from an upperclassman in the area. Outside, cadets had to "ping" (i.e., move at double time) and square corners.

Dining hall procedures were also highly structured. Each table had a table commandant who, as the representative of the chain of command, was responsible for the conduct and decorum of the cadets assigned to his or her table. Among the table commandant's specific duties, cited in the 1989-90 Fourth Class System circular, was preventing "unacceptable behavior such as throwing water, spreading food on shoes, standing on tables, and unsafe/destructive acts being condoned by upperclass cadets or being implemented by fourth class cadets." On a rotational basis, fourth class cadets were expected to perform the duties of three table positions—"gunner," "cold beverage corporal," and "hot beverage corporal." The duties of these positions were highly structured. For example, one of the gunner's duties was to cut the dessert into an exact number of equal size portions using the following protocol:

> "Sir/Ma'am, the dessert for this meal is ____. Would anyone not care for ____, Sir/Ma'am?" On receipt of the information needed, cut the required number of pieces and then announce: "Sir/Ma'am, the dessert has been cut. Dessert to Cadet ____ for inspection please, Sir/Ma'am."

All fourth class cadets were required to know the beverage preferences of the upperclass cadets at their table by the second meal. Fourth class cadets were also required to remove plates and utensils to the waiter's station when they were no longer required for the meal. After Cadet Basic Training, fourth class cadets were allowed to eat "at ease" rather than "at attention."

Fourth class cadets were also required to know and recite "fourth class knowledge." According to the Fourth Class System circular, fourth class knowledge contributed to cadet development by (1) introducing each cadet to the customs, traditions, and heritage of the Military Academy and the Army; (2) enhancing quick recall and instilling confidence and the ability to respond in a professional manner through required daily oral recitation; (3) developing pride in accomplishment and pride in Academy tradition by establishing a common link between each cadet, graduate, and future cadet; and (4) facilitating the transition to Cadet Field Training and upperclass responsibilities by teaching needed information about the Army, its missions, and equipment.

The circular also provided a time-sequenced list of specific knowledge requirements and where the information could be obtained. Items of daily fourth class knowledge required to be mastered by breakfast included (1) the menus for breakfast, lunch, and dinner; (2) the name, branch, and unit of assignment of the Officer in Charge; (3) current events, to include all relevant front-page news stories, key sport events, and the names of current newsmakers; and (4) "The Days." For the 1989-90 academic year, The Days consisted of the following protocol:

> "Sir/Ma'am, The Days. Today is (day) (date) (month) (year).
>
> "The athletic events for the day are as follows: Today at (time) in the (location) Army will defeat (opponent) in (sport).
>
> "There are (number) and a butt days until ring weekend for the Class of 1990. There are (number) and a butt days until Army defeats (home football opponent for that week) at Michie Stadium in football; there are (number) and a butt days until Army beats the hell out of Navy at Giants Stadium in the Meadowlands, New Jersey, in football; there are (number) and a butt days until Christmas leave for the United States Corps of Cadets; there are (number) and a butt days until 500th Night; there are (number) and a butt days until Yearling Winter Weekend; there are (number) and a butt days until 100th Night; there are (number) and a butt days until Spring leave for the upper three classes; there are (number) and a butt days until Graduation and graduation leave for the Class of 1990, Sir/Ma'am."

A fourth class cadet could get up to 8 hours of marching tours for failure to know required knowledge.

Hazing-Type Offenses Have Usually Been Charged as Lesser Offenses

The Regulations of the Corps of Cadets defines two kinds of mistreatment of fourth class cadets:

> "Hazing is defined as the wrongful striking, laying open hand upon, treating with violence or offering to do bodily harm by one cadet in a senior-subordinate relationship to another cadet with intent to punish or injure the subordinate cadet, or other unauthorized treatment by such cadet of another cadet of tyrannical, abusive, shameful, insulting, or humiliating nature. Hazing can also be defined to include verbal abuse.
>
> "Abuse of the Fourth Class System is defined as requiring duties of a Fourth Class Cadet other than those prescribed by the Fourth Class System Manual; ordering the performance of personal services from a Fourth Class Cadet; or dealing with a Fourth Class Cadet in a humiliating or demeaning manner."

During the 1-year period from July 1, 1989, to June 30, 1990, four cadets were found to have committed "hazing" and four were found to have committed "abuse of the Fourth Class System." The hazing cases included the following case.

- Three second class cadets were charged with a series of hazing-related offenses over a 3-month period, including subjecting fourth class cadets to degrading, humiliating, and abusive remarks, scraping shoes across the tops of the cadets' "inspection" shoes, and threatening to drive fourth class cadets out of the Academy. The investigating officer found two of the three cadets guilty of hazing but recommended that they not be separated or suspended. The superintendent upheld the guilty findings and gave them a suspended sentence of dismissal, 25 demerits, 25 hours of tours,[1] reduction in grade to cadet corporal, 75 days restriction to the cadet area, and loss of spring and summer leave.

Our review of Military Academy disciplinary cases identified several other cases that appeared to be hazing-related but were charged using other disciplinary offense codes. Examples of cases charged using other offense codes were:

- A third class cadet who said he was "counselling" a fourth class cadet struck a wall locker behind the fourth class cadet's head in an attempt to get his attention, brushing the plebe's neck or ear in the process. He was charged with "gross error in judgment" and received punishment of 35 demerits, 40 hours of tours, and a suspended reduction in rank from cadet corporal to cadet private.
- A second class cadet was charged with "exercising very poor judgment" for ordering a new cadet to drop and get up several times and pick up a chair and hold it out at arm's length. He received punishment of 25 demerits and 20 hours of tours.

In an effort to simplify its disciplinary system, the Military Academy reduced the number of offense codes from 186 to 28 in 1990. This change has made it more difficult to track offenses related to a specific area such as hazing. Offenses that would previously have been classified as "abusing the fourth class system" are now classified according to the type of offense such as "error in judgment" or "failure to maintain proper standards of behavior." Our review of the conduct offenses from July 1, 1990, through June 30, 1991, found at least 20 cases in which the offense appeared to involve a violation of the fourth class system. Examples include the following:

- In July 1990, a second class cadet was convicted of "conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman" for making his squad of new cadets do a

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[1] A tour refers to a 1-hour period of marching with a rifle.

"white tornado" (consume everything on the table, including the condiments). He received 35 demerits, 25 tours, and 2 months of restriction.

- In July 1990, a female second class cadet was found guilty of "failure to maintain proper standards of behavior with major effect" for requiring a female plebe in another squad to recite fourth class knowledge, directing her to make several trips to her room to obtain single sheets of paper, and making insulting remarks about the plebe's weight. She received 25 demerits, 40 hours of tours, a 1-month restriction, and reduction in grade to cadet private.

Fourth Class System Overhauled in 1990

In 1989, as part of an in-depth reassessment of virtually all aspects of Academy life, the Superintendent of the Military Academy commissioned three independent reviews of the fourth class system by separate committees of cadets, the Association of Graduates, and staff and faculty. The three reviews arrived at substantially the same conclusion: the fourth class system was in need of major change.

The cadet committee report cited three major problem areas. First, the fourth class system failed to create an atmosphere of development in either the fourth class or upperclass years. Second, the system allowed both unprofessional and unnecessary activities to take place. Third, the large gap between the fourth class and the upper three classes created an unhealthy, "we vs. them" environment.

The Association of Graduates reported that

- the time devoted to the system was excessive and was the equivalent of an additional academic course,
- senior-subordinate relationships reflected in various fourth class indoctrination practices did not reflect appropriate respect for the individual and were inconsistent with leadership development goals,
- upperclass cadets learned inappropriate leadership techniques that were inconsistent with leadership standards in Army units,
- some duties required of fourth class cadets had a personal service dimension to them,
- the system conflicted with academic program goals, and
- past incremental changes to correct the fourth class system had proven largely ineffective.

The faculty and staff report noted that years of custom and tradition had resulted in a system that continued to violate fundamental principles of leadership. They indicated that the root of the problem was the total subordination of one class of cadets to three upper classes of cadets. They stated that this situation was exacerbated by the tendency of many upperclass cadets to impose their own ideas about the purpose of the fourth class system, such as to weed out the weak or those who cannot function well under stress. They saw the traditional stress-imposing practices of the fourth class system as suffering from two main flaws: (1) the use of inappropriate leadership behavior as the primary vehicle for imposing stress on fourth class cadets and (2) the mistaken assumption that adaptation to one form of stress is transferable to other forms (i.e., learning to tolerate a yelling leader transforms to tolerating bullets whizzing past one's head). The faculty and staff report also noted that past attempts at reform had been limited to eliminating specific practices (such as "bracing"[2]), rather than systematically addressing the underlying relationship between plebes and upperclass cadets that gives rise to such practices.

The Cadet Leader Development System

With all three independent reviews arriving at the conclusion that the system was fundamentally flawed, the Military Academy embarked on overhauling it along the lines recommended by the three studies.

In August 1990, the new Cadet Leader Development System (CLDS) was introduced. A major feature of CLDS was a change in orientation from a "fourth class system" to a "four class system." This change was more than just a name change. It formally recognized that learning to be a leader is a developmental process and that the system should provide each of the four classes with a sequenced set of experiences aimed at systematically transforming them into leaders.

Under CLDS, each class year group would focus on the following roles:

- fourth class: functioning as a follower, supporting the chain of command, and performing one's duty;

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[2] Bracing refers to the practice of requiring plebes to assume an exaggerated position of attention with their shoulders thrown back and their arms pushed down toward the ground. An article written by several doctors at the West Point hospital in 1970 revealed that bracing for an extended period caused nerve damage and arm paralysis in 138 cadets over a 6-year period. Although the paralysis was temporary in all cases but one and cleared up within 6 weeks, it left cadets temporarily unable to raise their arms more than 40 degrees from their body.

- third class: functioning as a team leader (one-on-one developer);
- second class: leading small units; and
- first class: leading platoons or larger units.

CLDS also specified cadet knowledge requirements for each class.

A significant feature of CLDS is its effort to establish a climate that is free of the abuses and dysfunctional aspects of the old fourth class system. Under the new system, the following significant changes were made:

- In the cadet dining room, all cadets are now to be treated equally and have the same opportunity to enjoy their meal sitting "at ease." Table duties, such as serving beverages and cutting desserts, can be performed by anyone at the table rather than just the fourth class cadets. Knowledge recitation will not be required after the "take seats" command.
- In the knowledge recitation area, approved knowledge requirements have been established for all four classes. Required rote memorization of newspaper articles has been prohibited, as has memorization of trivia such as beverage preferences, complete menus, and sports scores.
- With regard to military bearing requirements, traditional practices that do not really constitute proper military bearing (such as pinging, bracing, squaring corners, and hugging the walls) have been prohibited.

Hazing-Type Treatment Appears to Have Been Reduced, but Some Forms Remain

Figure 4.1 shows the percentage of cadets in each of the four classes who indicated in their responses to our questionnaire that they had personally experienced particular types of treatment at least a couple of times a month during their fourth class year.[3] This figure also shows the responses of the Tactical Officers and Regimental Tactical Officers, who were asked to indicate how often they believed the typical cadet was exposed to the various types of fourth class treatment before the summer of 1990.[4]

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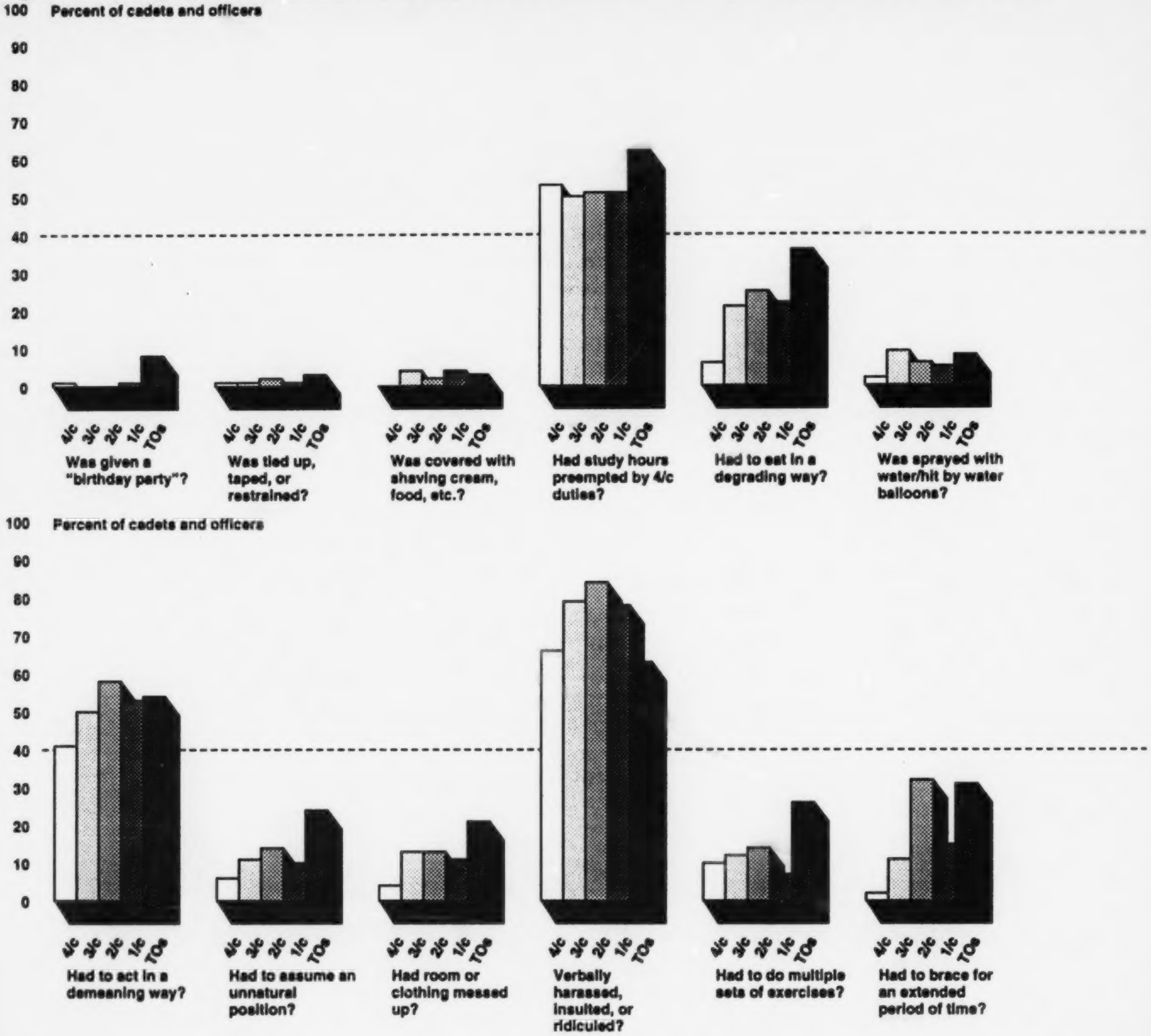
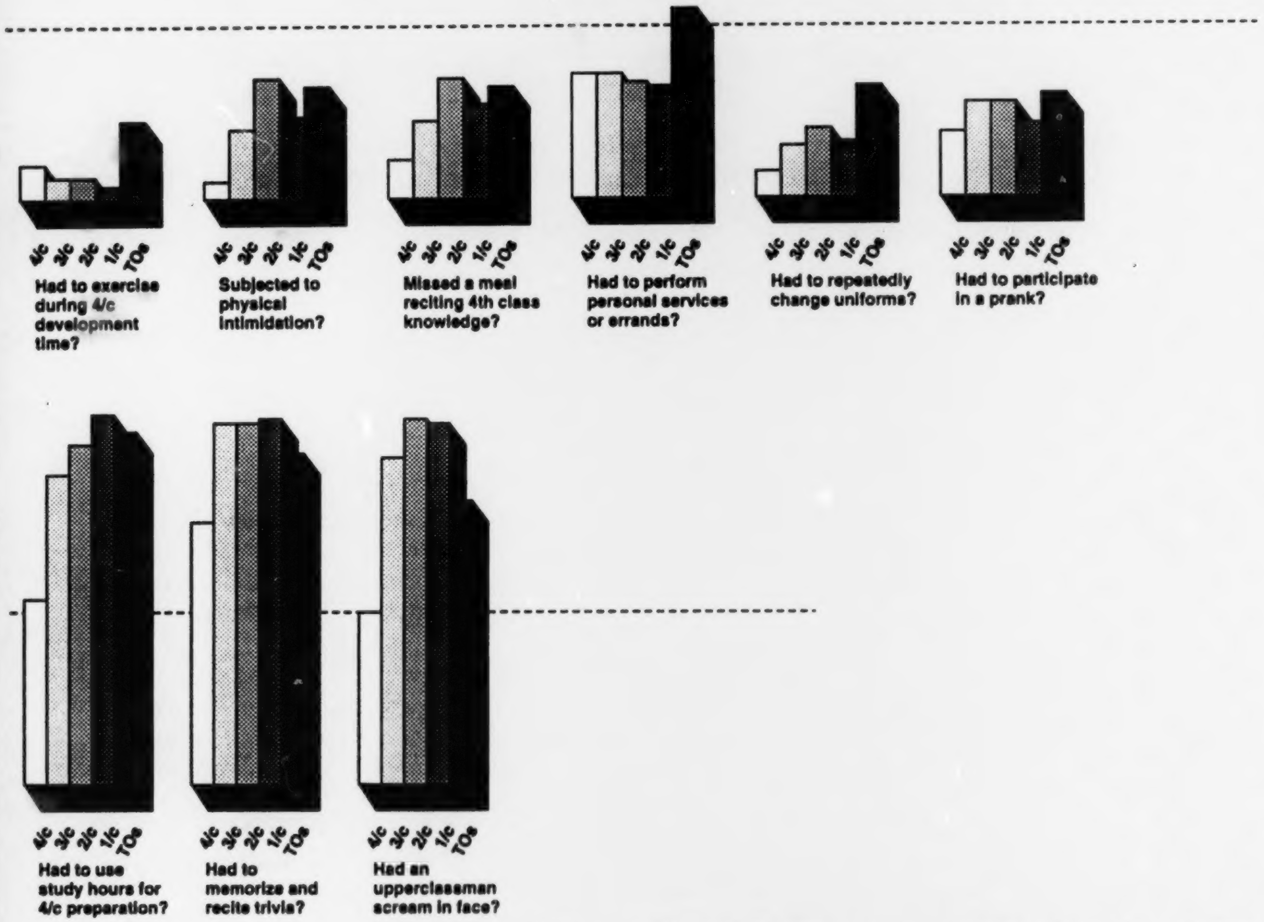
[3] Since our data was collected in 1991, the responses of the upperclass cadets represent their recollections of a period from 1 to 3 years earlier, while the fourth class cadets' responses are based on only a partial year's experience.

[4] The Tactical Officers are commissioned officers who oversee each of the 36 cadet companies. The Regimental Tactical Officers are the commissioned officers who oversee each of the four regiments, which are groupings of nine companies.

Figure 4.1: Hazing-Type Treatment Cited by Military Academy Cadets as Occurring a Couple of Times a Month or More





Note 1: Company and Brigade Tactical Officer responses refer to the frequency they estimate the average plebe experienced such treatment prior to the 1990-91 academic year.

Note 2: "Birthday party" refers to a tradition where a cadet is subjected to being covered with some kind of substance or some other prank on his or her birthday.

Source: Responses to GAO questionnaire.

The fourth class cadets reported a lower frequency than the other classes on 15 of the 21 types of fourth class treatment. These results suggest that the new rules are having the desired effect of reducing the inappropriate treatment of plebes. It does not appear that the higher rates reported by the upperclass cadets are due to faulty or biased recall since the assessment of the tactical officers regarding the frequency of the various practices before the new system were generally in the same range as, or somewhat higher than, the recollections of the upperclass cadets.

No clear patterns emerged regarding subgroups that may be subject to more hazing-type treatment than others. Overall, self-reported experience of hazing-type treatment did not vary significantly by gender, race, hispanic origin, religion, or athlete status.

Certain kinds of hazing-type treatment appear to continue at a relatively high frequency. For example, 40 percent or more of the fourth class cadets reported that, at least a couple of times per month, they had to

- act in a demeaning way,
- memorize and recite trivia,
- endure verbal harassment and insults,
- use study hours to prepare for their fourth class duties,
- perform fourth class duties during study hours, and
- endure an upperclassman screaming in their face.

While some of this may be the result of imprecise definitions or different frames of reference (such as cadets defining even Academy approved knowledge recitation requirements as trivia), the continuation of such activities at relatively high rates could mean that not all the changes have been fully accepted by the cadets and may take some time to become fully institutionalized.

It is important to note, however, that we administered our survey of West Point cadets about two-thirds of the way through the first year under the new four class system. Some confusion regarding the new rules could be expected. Nearly half of the cadets surveyed either agreed or strongly agreed that the distinction between allowable fourth class indoctrination and hazing was not clear. The distinction appeared least clear to third and fourth class cadets.

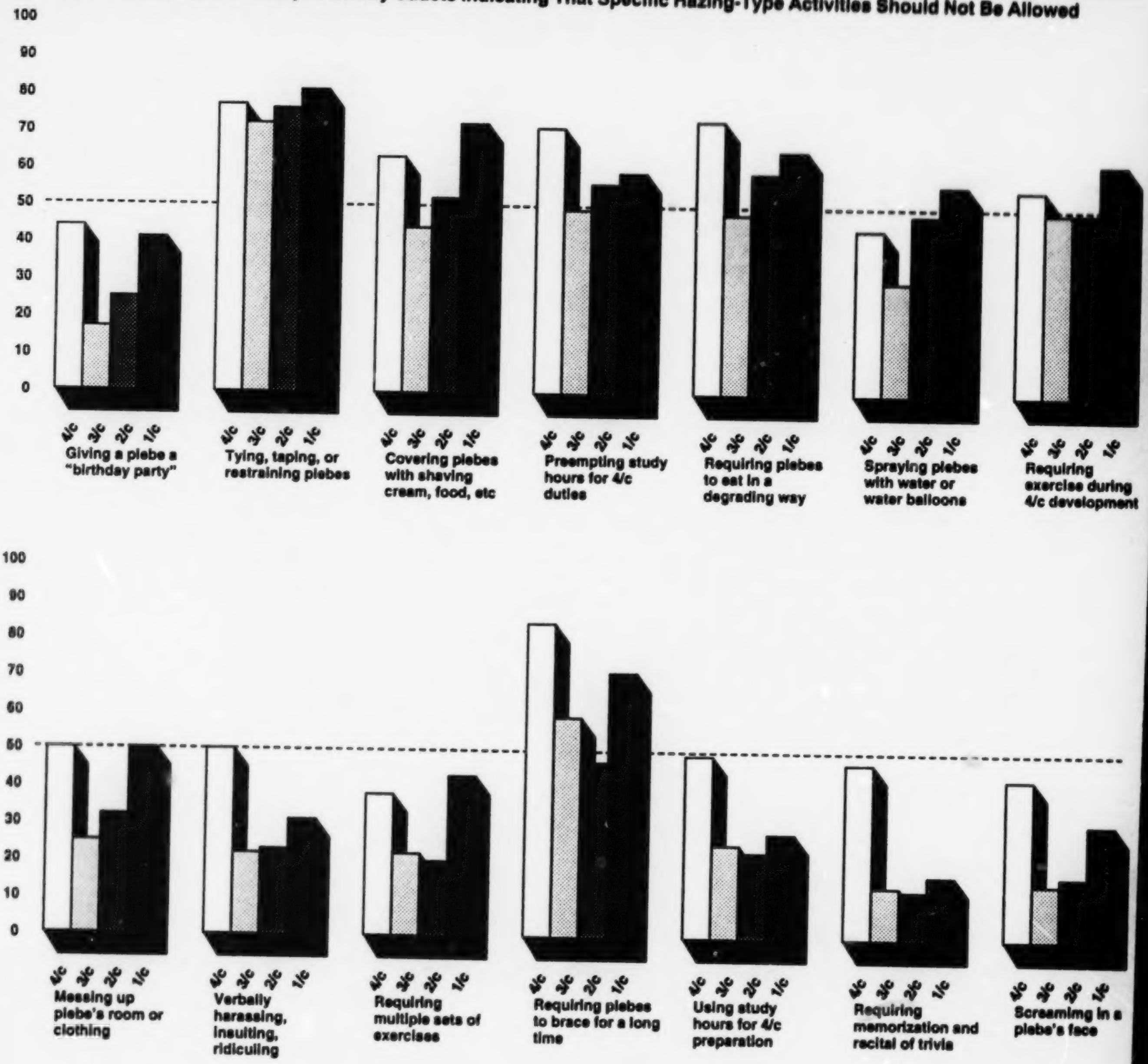
The distinction between allowable fourth class indoctrination practices and hazing appears to be clearer among the commandant's staff. We asked

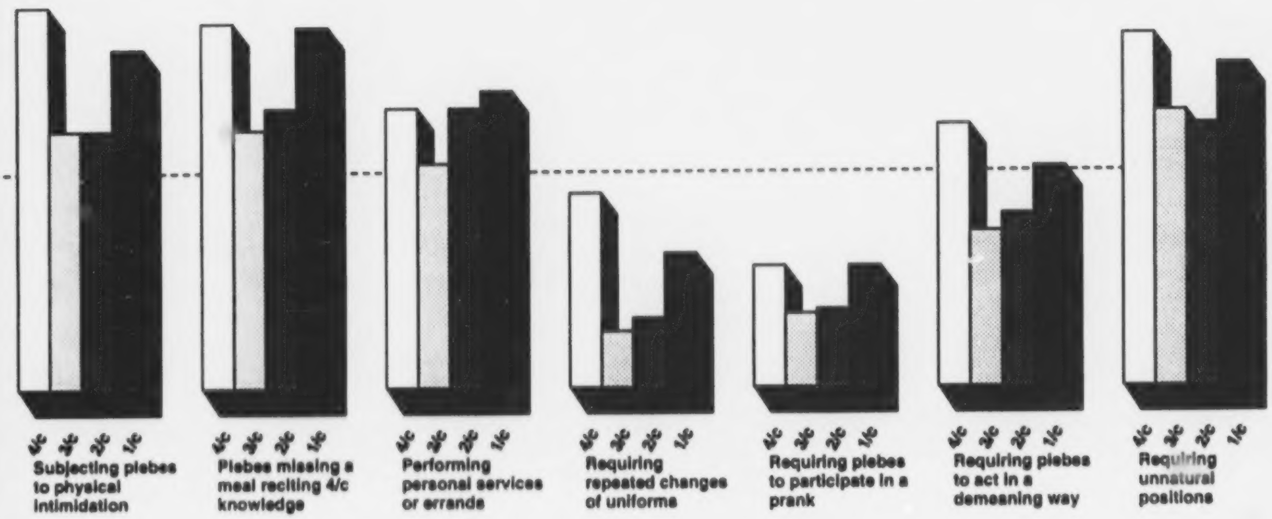
Company and Regimental Tactical officers whether the 21 types of treatment were allowed under the old fourth class system and under the current system. The average percentage of officers agreeing that the various practices were or were not against regulations rose from 71 percent in reference to the old system to 94 percent in reference to the new system.

Cadet Views on Hazing Vary by Class

Cadets were asked to indicate whether each type of treatment should be allowed to occur at the Military Academy, regardless of whether they had experienced that type of treatment. Figure 4.2 shows the cadets' responses by class.

Figure 4.2: Percentage of Military Academy Cadets Indicating That Specific Hazing-Type Activities Should Not Be Allowed





Source: Responses to GAO questionnaire.

In general, fourth class cadets were more likely than upperclass cadets to indicate that a given practice should not be allowed. For 14 of the 21 practices, about half or more of the fourth class cadets reported that the practice should not be allowed to occur at the Military Academy. It should be noted that more than half of the cadets, including fourth class cadets, indicate that some practices (e.g., screaming in a plebe's face) that have been banned should be allowed.

The first class cadets were the next most likely to indicate that a given practice should not be allowed. Their response could represent a more considered perspective on the value certain activities have in the development of future officers or it could reflect their role in the cadet chain of command as those charged with overseeing the operation of the system.

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

DOD did not fully agree with our finding that hazing occurred more frequently than the small number of officially charged cases implied. DOD stated that the determination of hazing was made by the academies in disciplinary hearings that evaluate all the facts in a particular case.

We found that the academies do not generally apply the term hazing to situations that do not involve physical hazing. The definition of hazing as stated in academy regulations (also found in the U.S. Code) includes terms such as "indignity," "humiliation," and "tyrannical, abusive, shameful, insulting, or humiliating" treatment. It is these forms of hazing that the academies appear to treat less seriously. Investigators from the DOD and Navy Inspector General's offices concluded that the Naval Academy failed to use the charge of "hazing" in several cases that merited it. Similarly, a 1990 review of the extent of hazing at West Point conducted by the Military Academy Inspector General concluded that there were many examples of behavior that could fall into the non-physical portion of the hazing definition and that the evidence suggested widespread violations of the prohibition against that type of hazing.

The Effect of Hazing on Cadets and Midshipmen

Our review indicates that hazing can have detrimental effects on cadets and midshipmen. A strong correlation exists between self-reported frequency of exposure to hazing-type treatment and measures of a number of negative outcomes, such as

- higher levels of physical and psychological stress,
- lower academic performance,
- attrition from the academies, and
- lower career motivation.

Hazing Can Result in Physical and Psychological Stress

Some may argue that many of the activities we have labeled as hazing-type treatment are relatively harmless (usually carried out in a spirit of fun) and serve as a release for both the fourth class and upperclass cadets and midshipmen. The view that hazing-type treatment is benign for many cadets and midshipmen fails to recognize the serious effects such activities can have on others.

Over the years, there have been numerous incidents demonstrating the potentially harmful effect that hazing can have on the physical and psychological well-being of cadets and midshipmen. In the fall of 1973, a cadet resigned from the Military Academy after reportedly being "hazed" into a state of acute dehydration. In 1979, hazing activities committed by upperclass cadets at West Point included

- forcing a woman cadet to bite the head off a chicken to cure her of squeamishness;
- disrobing a male cadet, binding him, and covering him with shaving cream; and
- dressing in Ku Klux Klan robes to intimidate hazing victims.

In 1983, 13 Air Force Academy fourth class cadets were hospitalized and 136 more were treated (most for dehydration) after rigorous Hell Week activities. In 1989, a Bethesda Naval Hospital Psychiatry Department medical board concluded that a fourth class midshipman's debilitating headaches were the result of stress encountered during plebe year at the Naval Academy.

Our questionnaire included items aimed at assessing how often respondents had experienced various physical (15 items) and psychological (8 items) symptoms of stress. These items were summed to provide scales of physical and psychological stress. Similarly, we summed each respondent's answers across all 21 fourth class treatment items to construct a measure of the amount of hazing-type treatment received. We transformed these stress and hazing scales into categories of low, average, and high.[1]

Figures 5.1 and 5.2 show the relationship between the amount of hazing-type treatment experienced by fourth class cadets and midshipmen and the two measures of stress. For the fourth class cadets and midshipmen at all three academies, greater exposure to hazing-type activities was associated with higher levels of physical and psychological stress. For example, figure 5.1 shows that about 50 percent of the fourth class cadets at the Military Academy whose responses to the set of hazing questions put them in the "high" hazing treatment category were also in the "high" physical stress category, compared to only about 20 percent of the cadets in the "low" and "average" hazing categories.

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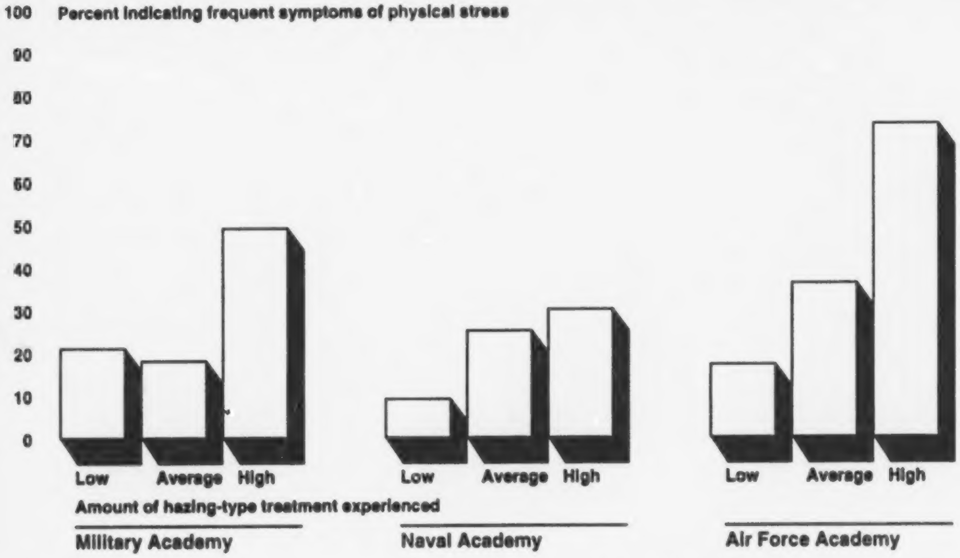
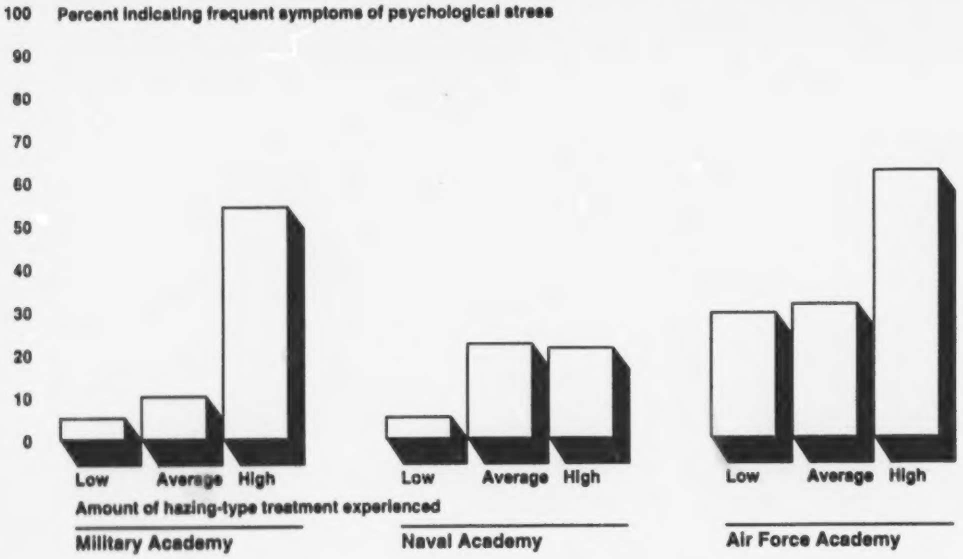
[1] The transformation assigned respondents scoring between one standard deviation above and below the mean to the category of "average." In a normal distribution, this typically accounts for slightly over two-thirds of the cases. Scores more than one standard deviation below the mean were assigned to the "low" category and those more than one standard deviation above the mean were assigned to the "high" category.

Figure 5.1: Relationship Between Hazing-Type Treatment and Physical Stress Among Fourth Class Students



Source: Responses to GAO questionnaire.

Figure 5.2: Relationship Between Hazing-Type Treatment and Psychological Stress Among Fourth Class Students



Source: Responses to GAO questionnaire.

Hazing Interferes With Academics

The Military Academy Association of Graduates' review concluded that the fourth class system consumed too much of the plebe's time and conflicted with the goals of the academic program. A number of faculty members from each of the academies made comments concerning the negative effect of fourth class activities on academics. For example, faculty members wrote

> "Their [the midshipmen's] chronic sleepiness is a symptom of the exaggerated demands of the [plebe] system and its distractions. (USNA faculty member.)
>
> "Just yesterday a cadet canceled an AI [additional instruction] session because he needed more time to get ready for a big inspection. (USMA faculty member.)
>
> "Call to quarters for academics is being used by upperclassmen to prevent fourth class from studying, forcing fourth class to stay up late to study, making them lose sleep, which affects everything. (USAFA faculty member.)
>
> "I have had 18 year-olds in my office sobbing because they can't devote the time they'd like to their studies. These are kids who were valedictorians—and they come here and are told to memorize menus. (USNA faculty member.)

> "I don't expect any improvement until we no longer hear that certain hours are reserved for studying and instead hear that indoctrination (hazing) is limited to only a few specific hours." (USNA faculty member.)

Some students at the academies also identified fourth class duties as a factor inhibiting their academic performance. For example, a fourth class cadet stated

> "We usually have to blow off homework so that we can shine shoes, etc. It is better to get a D- than to be hazed by an upperclassman." (USMA cadet.)

Research findings also demonstrate that academy environments can hamper high-aptitude students from applying their intellectual abilities. A study of two groups of U.S. Coast Guard Academy cadets showed that stress generated by interactions with cadet and officer superiors reduced the relationship between academic ability (as measured by Scholastic Aptitude Test scores) and grade point average.[2]

Our questionnaire included an item asking respondents whether learning fourth class knowledge tended to take precedence over homework. Figure 5.3 shows the responses of fourth class students, faculty, and the commandant's staff at each of the three academies.

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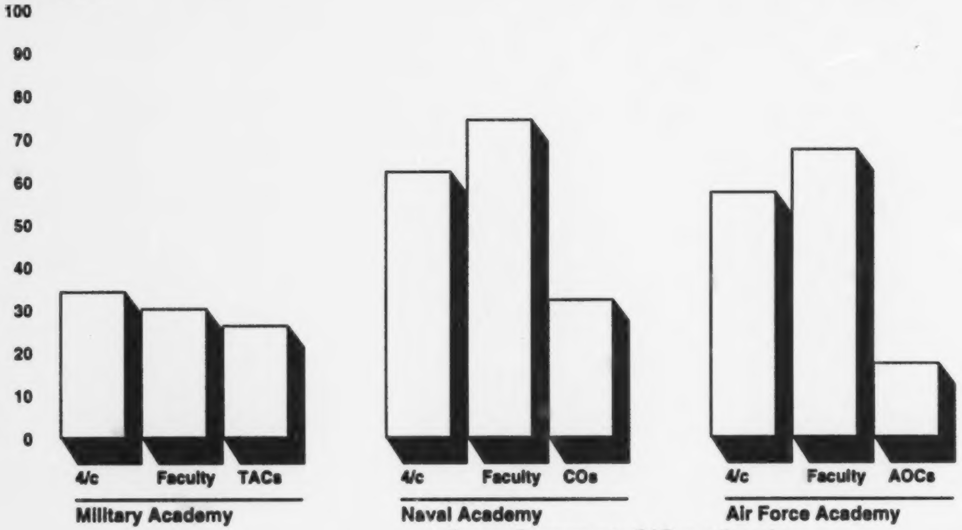
[2] V. Barnes, E.H. Potter, III, and F.E. Fiedler, "Effect of Interpersonal Stress on the Prediction of Academic Performance," Journal of Applied Psychology, Vol. 68, No. 4 (1983), pp. 686-697.

Figure 5.3: Percentage of Cadets and Midshipmen Who Agree That "Learning Fourth Class Knowledge Has Priority Over Homework"

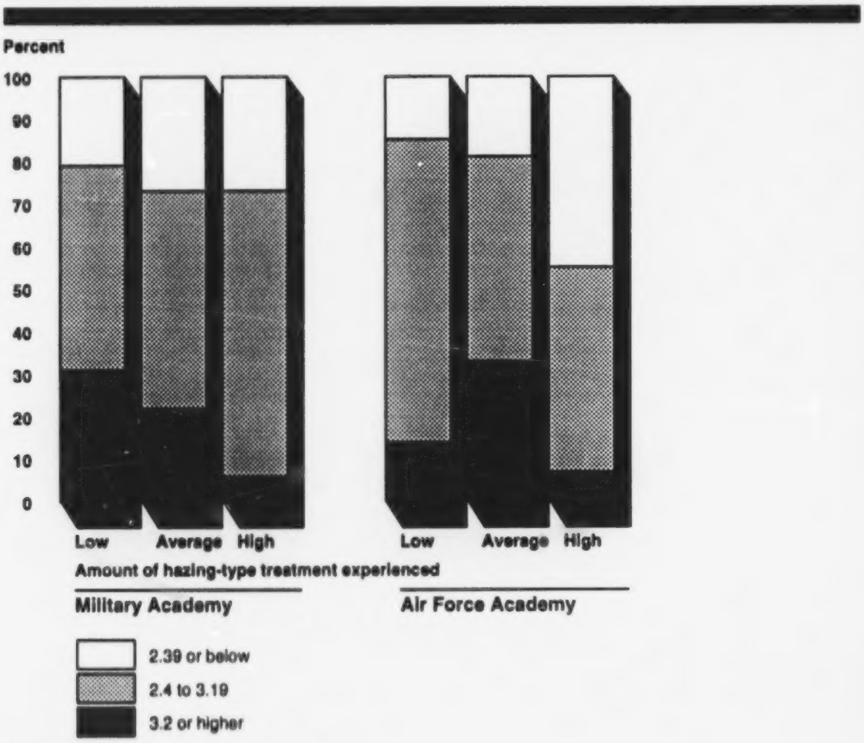


Source: Responses to GAO questionnaire.

A fairly high consensus among the fourth class students and faculty at the Naval and Air Force academies indicated that priority tended to be given to learning fourth class knowledge. At the Military Academy, a smaller percentage of respondents reported that fourth class knowledge took precedence over homework, which may be another indication of the success of the Military Academy's overhaul of its fourth class system. At each academy, the commandant's staff was the least likely to agree that homework was subordinated to fourth class knowledge.

Figure 5.4 shows the relationship between hazing-type treatment and the academic grade point average of fourth class cadets at the Military and Air Force academies. (Because our questionnaire was administered at the Naval Academy before the end of their first semester, the fourth class midshipmen did not yet have official grades.) In general, cadets exposed to higher amounts of hazing-type treatment were more likely to have grade point averages below 2.4, particularly at the Air Force Academy.

Figure 5.4: Relationship Between Hazing-Type Treatment and Academic Grade Point Average Among Fourth Class Students



Source: Responses to GAO questionnaire.

Hazing May Increase Attrition

For the classes of 1972 through 1991, attrition averaged about 28 percent at the Naval Academy, 37 percent at the Air Force Academy, and 35 percent at the Military Academy. Several studies have identified a relationship between hazing-type treatment and attrition. In the early 1970s, an Air Force Academy committee responsible for reviewing the fourth class system concluded from its study of exit interviews that 25 percent of the 86 members of the Class of 1972 who left before the end of the first semester left because of the fourth class system. In an extensive review of attrition of academy cadets and midshipmen in the mid-1970s, we found that many of the factors contributing to attrition were part of the fourth class system.[3] We noted that many students entering the academies were not fully committed to a military career and that the academies needed to identify aspects of the fourth class system that discouraged career intent and change them.

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[3] Student Attrition at the Five Federal Service Academies (GAO/FPCD-76-12, Mar. 5, 1976).

Statements by attritted cadets and midshipmen regarding hazing and treatment under the fourth class system have sometimes been written off merely as attempts to shift the blame for failure. Some argue that screening out those who cannot adapt to stress or the military way of life is a legitimate function of the academies. However, as the West Point faculty and staff study noted, hazing and fourth class treatment do not really correspond to the stresses actually encountered in the military service. Therefore, such treatment may screen out students who, although unwilling to accept the hazing, would adapt and perform very well as officers. Given the high cost of producing academy graduates, anything that is likely to increase attrition should be of great concern to academy officials.[4]

Our questionnaire included an item aimed at assessing how often cadets and midshipmen consider resigning from their respective academies. Figure 5.5 shows that those fourth class cadets and midshipmen at all three academies who reported experiencing a higher frequency of hazing-type treatment tended to think more frequently about resigning from the academy.

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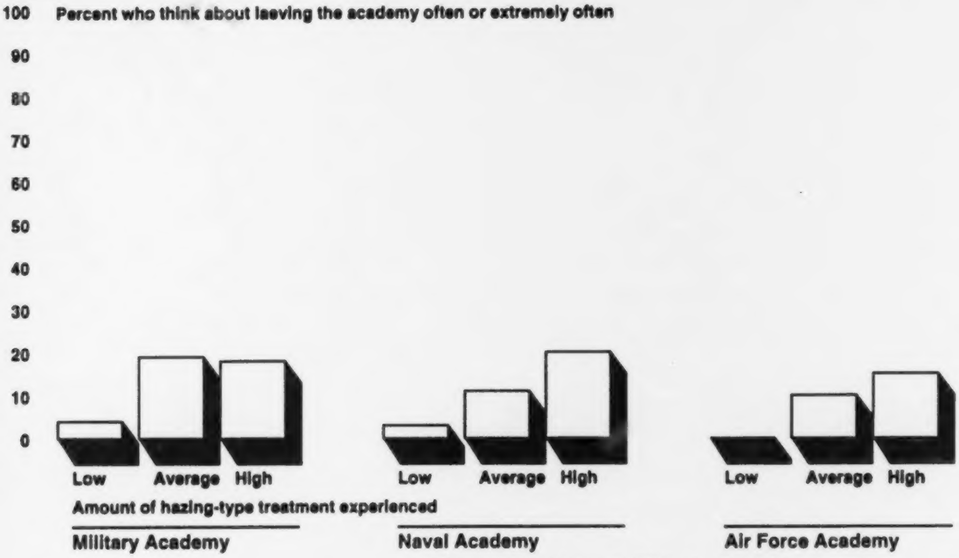
[4] DOD Service Academies: Improved Cost and Performance Monitoring Needed (GAO/NSIAD-91-79, July 16, 1991).

Figure 5.5: Relationship Between Hazing-Type Treatment and Thoughts About Leaving the Academy Among Fourth Class Students

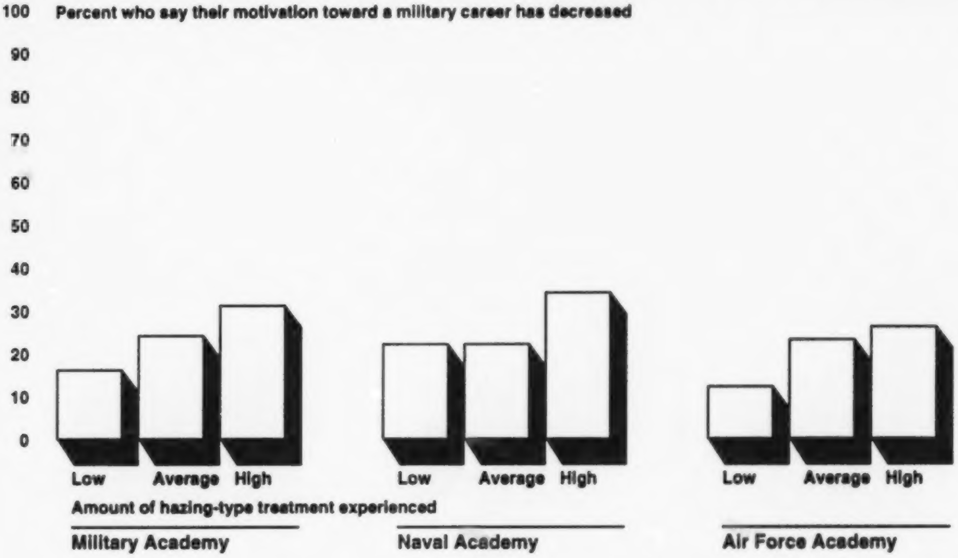


Source: Responses to GAO questionnaire.

Hazing May Deter Some From Making the Military a Career

Respondents were also asked whether their motivation to make the military a career had changed since they entered the academy. Figure 5.6 shows the amount of hazing-type treatment received by the fourth class cadets and midshipmen at all three academies was directly related to decreased motivation to make the military a career.

Figure 5.6: Relationship Between Hazing-Type Treatment and Decrease in Career Motivation Among Fourth Class Students

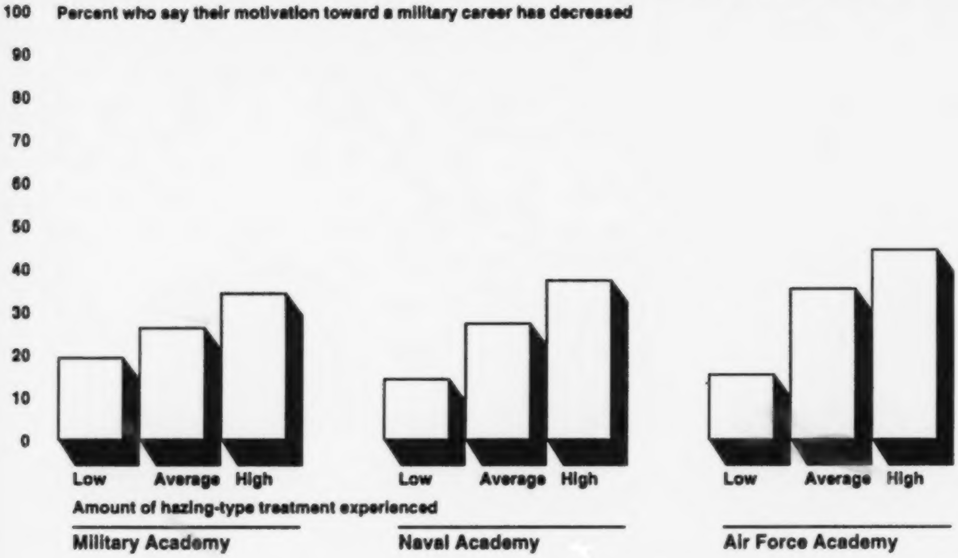


Source: Responses to GAO questionnaire.

Treatment during the fourth class year may also have a residual effect on the career intent of those who complete their academy programs. For example, in a Military Academy survey of the Class of 1988, only 38 percent agreed that the fourth class system had a positive effect on their commitment to the Army.

Figure 5.7 shows the relationship between the upperclass cadets' recollections of the amount of hazing they received during their fourth class year and change in their motivation toward a military career. At all three academies, the greater the amount of hazing-type treatment received during the fourth class year, the more likely the upperclass cadets and midshipmen were to indicate that their motivation toward a military career had decreased.

Figure 5.7: Relationship Between Hazing-Type Treatment and Decrease in Career Motivation Among Upperclass Students



Source: Responses to GAO questionnaire

Conclusions

While hazing may have little or no effect on some individuals, it has a negative effect on others. In general, those who have been exposed to more hazing-type treatment during their fourth class year tend to have lower grade point averages and report higher levels of physical and psychological stress, more frequent thoughts about resigning from the academy, and a decline in their motivation toward a military career.

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

DOD stated that there was no doubt that hazing was harmful to the well-being of cadets and midshipmen and that is why it is prohibited. DOD also stated that it saw stress as necessary in the training environment to prepare men and women for military service as officers. DOD acknowledged that the academy programs involve artificially imposed stress and related it to the need to train officers capable of functioning within a stressful environment. DOD noted that the conclusion that higher stress levels are associated with higher exposure to hazing-related activities is logical, but that such activities are not the sole cause of higher stress.

We did not intend to imply that hazing-type treatment was the only cause of stress. Our point is that hazing-type treatment is an inappropriate and unrealistic form of stress. The kind of stress imposed on fourth class academy students bears little relationship to the kind of stress encountered by active duty officers. While research indicates that moderate levels of stress have a beneficial impact on learning, it has also shown that excessive stress can have debilitating effects and interfere with the acquisition of skills. Furthermore, research on military training indicates that to have a beneficial impact on post-training performance, the kinds of stress imposed in training should be similar to those that will be encountered during actual performance.[5] Therefore, it is important that the academies ensure that the types and amount of stress imposed on students are within appropriate and effective bounds.

DOD also agreed that the frequency of hazing-type treatment was logically related to diminished career motivation. DOD also stated that some attrition might be necessary to screen students so that those who were not adaptable to a stressful environment are not commissioned. While we agree that such screening is legitimate, we are concerned that some students may be screened out who would adapt quite well to the actual stresses of military service but who are unwilling to endure hazing-type treatment.

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[5] N. Friedland and G. Keinan, "Training effective performance in stressful situations: Three approaches and implications for combat training," Military Psychology, Vol.4 (1992), pp. 157-174.

Chapter 6

The Academies Have Not Addressed All Issues to Eliminate Hazing

During the last 2 years, West Point and the Naval Academy took significant steps to overhaul their fourth class systems, while the Air Force Academy made no major changes. The Military and Naval academies have clarified specific roles of all four classes, increased the focus on positive leader behaviors, and eliminated or reduced some of the traditional practices of their fourth class systems that were prone to abuse or had little or no connection to leadership development. Their efforts appear to have lowered the frequency of exposure to hazing-type practices in the class that came in after the changes were implemented.

While the effects of the recent changes are encouraging, some issues have still not been adequately addressed. For example,

- the definition of "hazing" is still unclear to many,
- some questionable elements of the traditional fourth class system continue to exist,
- the length of fourth class indoctrination may be longer than necessary,
- the prohibition against hazing has not been consistently enforced,
- cadets and midshipmen are reluctant to change the system.

The Limits of Legitimate Fourth Class Indoctrination Are Still Unclear to Many

Many of the practices that we have labeled as hazing-type activities are permitted, within limits, by the rules of the fourth class indoctrination systems. Hazing can occur when those limits are exceeded. For example, upperclassmen are permitted to require recitation of officially sanctioned fourth class knowledge. However, this allowable activity can become hazing if unauthorized information requirements are imposed, if the recitation is required at unauthorized times, if the questioning is done in an abusive manner, or if unauthorized penalties are imposed for failure to know fourth class knowledge. As a result, the distinction between hazing and approved fourth class indoctrination is not a matter of simple black or white comparison, but an issue involving a more difficult and subjective assessment of different shades of grey.

Some of the activities we have referred to as hazing-type treatment, such as spraying students with water or hitting them with water balloons, can be viewed as relatively harmless, spirit-related pranks. Cadets and midshipmen are, after all, college students and therefore prone to engage in many of the pranks and hijinx that are practiced by their civilian counterparts. Since class identification is very strong at the academies, such pranks and hijinx are often of the class against class variety.

However, the fact that an activity has been directed at the fourth class is not, in itself, sufficient to classify that activity as hazing. The misuse of formally granted authority is the distinguishing characteristic. That is, if a fourth class cadet or midshipman is required, under a stated or implied threat of punishment for noncompliance, to submit to humiliating or demeaning treatment that is forbidden or exceeds authorized levels, that activity probably should be classified as hazing. On the other hand, in class versus class, spirit-related activities in which the fourth class is free to resist or retaliate in kind without fear of upperclassmen invoking the authority of their higher rank to punish fourth class resistance or retaliation, the activities might not be hazing. If specific individuals are singled out and subjected to significantly more such spirit-related treatment than their peers, such targeted harassment may be hazing.

The proportion of cadets and midshipmen indicating that the distinction between allowable fourth class indoctrination and improper fourth class treatment or hazing was unclear was 33 percent at the Naval Academy, 41 percent at the Air Force Academy, and 48 percent at the Military Academy. This continued lack of clarity hinders academy attempts to eliminate hazing.

Questionable Elements of the Traditional Fourth Class System Still Exist

We have noted that certain elements of the traditional fourth class systems are readily perceived by individuals or the general public as hazing. Given the difficulty in defining precise limits for these elements, they are inherently subject to potential abuse. This creates a need for continual assessment to ensure that fourth class indoctrination achieves its objectives while minimizing undesirable side effects.

The Rationale for Some Traditional Fourth Class Practices Appears Questionable

The academies currently relate certain elements of fourth class treatment to some activity in the active service that they cite as analogous. For example, the Naval Academy's Fourth Class Indoctrination instruction relates "uniform races" to "fleet requirements for rapid donning of battle dress, flight gear, field clothing, and equipment under emergency conditions."[1] Similarly, the Air Force Academy's Fourth Class Training System Manual relates the rote knowledge requirement to the need for aircrew members to memorize emergency procedures verbatim. Such rationales, however, could be questioned since the activities involve relatively low-level skills and fourth class training occurs 4 years before the active duty requirements the activities are purportedly related to. In addition, these activities are not part of the other officer commissioning programs that have produced over 90 percent of new officers over the last 20 years.

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[1] According to the Fourth Class Indoctrination instruction, uniform races are timed uniform changes conducted to instruct fourth class midshipmen in familiarity with uniforms, standards of promptness, optimum use of time, attention to detail, and self-confidence.

Another purported rationale for maintaining the traditional rigor of the fourth class systems, as cited in a number of cadet and midshipmen comments, is that it can prepare academy graduates to endure prisoner of war (POW) treatment, should they ever become captured. Proponents of this view cite the case of an admiral, who was a POW in Vietnam for over 7 years. The admiral wrote

> "I came out of prison being very happy about the merits of plebe year at the Naval Academy. I hope we do not ever dilute those things. You have to practice being hazed. You have to learn to take a bunch of junk and accept it with a sense of humor."

However, many other POWs who have not undergone rigorous plebe treatment also survived that ordeal. Moreover, DOD and academy officials have stated that preparing plebes to be POWs is not a legitimate rationale for hazing at the academies.

The Necessity for Rigorous Fourth Class Indoctrination Has Not Been Demonstrated

Advocates of a rigorous fourth class indoctrination system believe that it has been very effective at developing leaders. They say that the stress of the fourth class year develops a "can do" attitude and increases the individual's ability to manage tight time constraints and make rapid decisions under intense pressure and stress. Detractors say that the constant harassment can create "inefficient nervous nellies" and that they may become conditioned to make rapid decisions even when time and circumstances warrant more thought-out decisions.

The belief that the traditional fourth class system is an effective method for developing military officers has been accepted largely as an article of faith. There has been little research into the effects of various kinds of officer training programs.

The only study we could identify dealing specifically with the relationship between the intensity of academy-type indoctrination and the quality of the graduates produced, found that less stressful police recruit training resulted in better-performing police officers.[2] In this experimental study, matched groups of police recruit trainees were assigned to control group and experimental group training programs. The control group training consisted of the traditional stressful police academy environment, characterized by such factors as

- strict militaristic procedures and atmosphere;
- unpredictability and uncertainty regarding appropriate required behavior, activities, schedules, time, and expectations of training staff;
- continuous doubt expressed about the trainees' ability, frequent recognition of the trainees' inferior status and shortcomings;
- loud, public verbal abuse imposed for performance failures;
- loud, harsh public discipline;
- punitive physical training (e.g., running, pushups) for mistakes; and
- performance requirements designed to either exceed the trainees' capacity or the time allowed for completion.

Many of those elements are comparable to the traditional fourth class training environment at the service academies.

The experimental group training, on the other hand, was exposed to a less stressful training environment characterized by such factors as

- relaxed, supportive procedures and atmosphere;
- friendly, supportive relationship between trainees and trainers;
- administrative discipline, private counseling about problems and mistakes, an absence of punitive physical training; and
- a normal tone of voice used by trainers and trainees.

Aside from the differences in atmosphere, the two kinds of training were designed and organized to be as equivalent as possible with regard to curricula, instructors, assignments, and evaluators.

The study followed the new recruits for 2 years following their graduation from the police academy and repeatedly assessed their performance on a variety of measures. The majority of all the evaluation measures indicated that police academy recruits subjected to less stress during their initial months of training performed at a higher level of proficiency in the field, were more satisfied with their jobs, and performed at a level more acceptable to persons served than those who underwent the higher stress indoctrination.

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[2] H.H. Earle, An Investigation of Authoritarian Versus Non-Authoritarian Training in the Selection and Training of Law Enforcement Officers (doctoral dissertation presented to the University of Southern California, 1972).

If a rigorous fourth class system was an indispensable necessity for producing effective officers, one would expect academy-produced officers to significantly outperform officers commissioned through programs such as the Reserve Officers' Training Corps and Officer Candidate School, where initial indoctrination is of shorter duration and lower intensity. As we pointed out in a recent review of the cost and performance of the service academies,[3] compared with officers from other sources, academy graduates had remained in the service longer, had progressed somewhat faster, and were more likely to have attained flag rank. However, these retention and progression statistics were affected by a number of factors that are not directly related to the quality of the various commissioning programs or the officers they produce.

Opinions About the Length of the Fourth Class Indoctrination Period Are Mixed

Traditionally, the fourth class indoctrination period has run until the first class cadets and midshipmen graduate. Recently, there have been a number of suggestions that the academies reduce the length of the fourth class year. For example, in 1990 the DOD Inspector General stated that the 2 months of plebe summer may be a sufficient period of indoctrination for fourth class students and recommended that the Navy reconsider the entire concept of plebe year. A retired admiral who graduated from the Naval Academy also proposed ending plebe indoctrination at the start of the academic year.

Some academy faculty members also indicated that the fourth class indoctrination period should be shortened. The following are some examples of faculty comments:

> "Cut down the length of plebe indoctrination system 'intensity' . . . . One full year of this pressure cooker is too long and ineffective. (USNA faculty member.)

> "Do away with being a plebe for the whole year, have one week in 4/c year as plebe week . . . and have it early in the fall. (USNA faculty member.)

> "The 4th class training lasts too long—finish it by Christmas. (USAFA faculty member.)

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[3] DOD Service Academies: Improved Cost and Performance Monitoring Needed (GAO/NSIAD-91-79, July 16, 1991).

"The fourth class system needs to be revised. I feel the duration should be shortened perhaps to around Thanksgiving or the end of first semester." (USAFA faculty member.)

At the Military Academy, the staff and faculty committee that studied the fourth class system proposed that the recognition of fourth class cadets as full members of the Corps of Cadets follow plebe summer training. Similarly, a retired lieutenant general concluded that one semester would be sufficient time for fourth class cadets to master the fairly simple tasks of followership and that the plebe system lost its purpose and momentum and became counterproductive in the winter and spring. He recommended that the plebe system be condensed into a single semester.

On the other hand, a majority of the Military Academy Association of Graduates committee members felt that significantly shortening the fourth class indoctrination period would not provide sufficient time to accomplish the objectives of the fourth class system and would probably not be acceptable to the cadets.

Figure 6.1 shows the responses of the cadets and midshipmen we surveyed to the question regarding when the fourth class indoctrination period should end. The upperclassmen, particularly at the Military and Naval academies, generally agree that the duration of plebe treatment should not be shortened. A considerable proportion of the fourth class cadets and midshipmen indicated that the indoctrination portion of the year should be somewhat shorter, with the consensus at the Military and Air Force academies being that it should end about midway through the spring academic term.

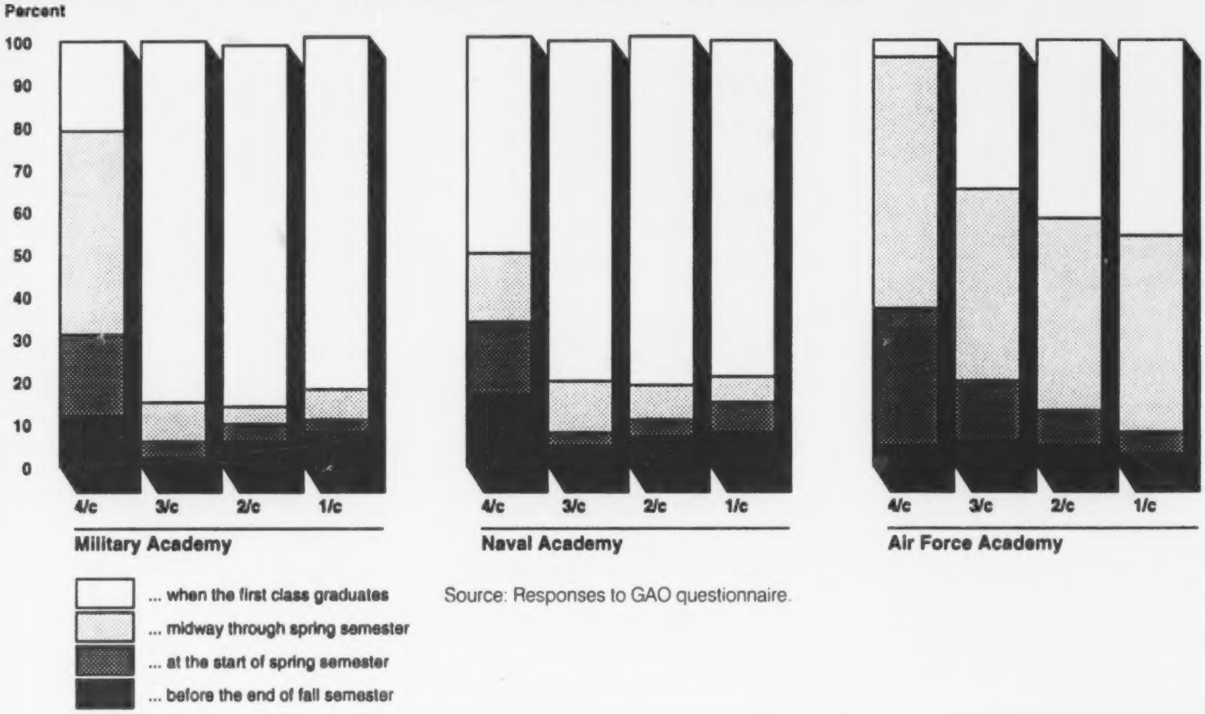


Figure 6.1: Cadet and Midshipman Views Regarding When Fourth Class Indoctrination Should End

Source: Responses to GAO questionnaire.

While the length of the fourth class indoctrination period should not be set by consensus, if the goals of the fourth class system were articulated with sufficient specificity that their accomplishment could be measured, the appropriate length of the indoctrination period could be established. Since the fourth class indoctrination system is vulnerable to abuse, it would not be advisable for the indoctrination program to extend beyond what is needed to accomplish its objectives.

Possible Causes of Inconsistent Enforcement of Prohibitions Against Hazing

As we have noted, there have been few cases of individuals being formally charged with hazing. In those cases in which hazing-related activities have occurred, offenders have generally been charged with lesser offenses. Since hazing is potentially a separation level offense, it may be seen by academy officials as carrying too harsh a punishment.

The reluctance of academy officials to deal more harshly with hazers may be related to their perceptions of the characteristics of typical offenders and their motivations, the characteristics of the typical hazing recipient, and the failure of some of those who are hazed to report the incidents when they happen.

Typical Hazer Is a High Performer

In our examination of the cases involving hazing and improper fourth class treatment, a fairly clear picture emerges of the typical offender. The typical offender is not a renegade or sadist, but rather a highly committed and strongly motivated high performer. The typical offender is one who took it upon himself to "shape up" a fourth class student who was perceived to be a low performer. The records of their disciplinary hearings often included strong endorsements from their officers and faculty that they be retained.

The offender's stated goal was usually to make the fourth class student into a better cadet or midshipman or to prevent that individual's attitude or performance from infecting that of the other fourth class students. The hazing generally occurred when the offender became frustrated in that effort.

Because the typical offender was considered a high performer and the motivations of the offender are those that academy officials are in sympathy with, even if they cannot condone the offender's behavior, the reluctance of academy officials to take more harsh action against offenders is predictable.

Typical Hazing Recipient Seen as Poor Performer

We found no evidence of gender or minority subgroups being targeted for more hazing. There were indications, however, that individuals who are seen as poor performers appear to receive more hazing-type treatment.

From our examination of hazing-related disciplinary cases, we found that many recipients of more intense or frequent hazing-type treatment are individuals who were perceived by upperclassmen as poorly motivated or poor performers. The situation can, to some extent, become a self-fulfilling prophesy. When fourth class cadets or midshipmen are "identified" as being poor performers, they attract more attention and pressure from upperclassmen, which often compounds rather than solves their performance problems. For example, at a hearing for an Air Force Academy fourth class cadet who had exceeded the limit on demerits, it came out that he had been singled out for repeated individual attention by upperclassmen because of a reputation for being arrogant during Basic Cadet Training.

Since the cadets and midshipmen who receive more intense or frequent hazing-type treatment are often those reputed to be poor or marginal performers, there may be a tendency for academy officials to see the recipients of such treatment as those who did not belong at the academy and to view the ultimate outcome as appropriate, however inappropriate the actions that led to that outcome may have been. This view, however, may fail to recognize the degree to which the individual's perceived performance may be a result of inappropriate or disproportionate attention from upperclassmen.

Hazing Is Not Always Reported in a Timely Manner

Another commonality in some of the hazing-related cases we reviewed is that the extent of the hazing-type treatment did not come to light until the recipient had either left the academy or was in the process of leaving. The lack of timely reporting decreases the likelihood that the hazer will be charged since officials tend to be more skeptical of the validity of the charges and the details of the incidents may have faded from the memories of the principals and witnesses.

The willingness of hazing recipients to make specific charges increases when they separate since they no longer need to fear reprisal. Data from our questionnaire indicates that fear of reprisal for reporting incidents of hazing may be fairly widespread among fourth class cadets and midshipmen. The percentage of fourth class respondents who indicated that they would hesitate to report such an incident for fear of reprisal was about 38 percent at the Naval Academy, 61 percent at the Air Force Academy, and 71 percent at the Military Academy.

These high percentages indicate that the academies may have to provide alternative reporting channels outside the chain of command and ensure that those who report hazing are protected against reprisal.

Cadets and Midshipmen May Resist Changes in the Fourth Class System

The academies are likely to encounter considerable resistance to change from the cadets and midshipmen. In our questionnaire, we provided an opportunity for respondents to write in comments on any topics they chose. One of the most frequent subjects of comments made by cadets and midshipmen at all three academies concerned changing the fourth class systems at those academies. Sentiment, particularly among the upperclassmen, ran heavily against reducing the rigor of the fourth class systems. Their comments generally conveyed the perception that the reduction of stress in the fourth class year had produced a class that was less disciplined and had less spirit and pride than its predecessors. For example, West Point cadets wrote

"... the disgraceful and unprecedented elimination of a fourth class system designed to build mental toughness and a stress-handling capability is why this year's Corps motto is, 'Hibernate and Graduate'.

"The institution has become a 'kinder and gentler place,' within the last year, maybe too kind and gentle. The plebes are not put under any stress. There seems to be no sense of motivation, pride, urgency, and duty with the Class of '94 in general.

"Plebe year gives a bond. The people running USMA have cheated cadets by changing the system after they were here.

"I agree with the way the old 4th class system was written, not the way it was enforced. When I was a plebe, an upperclassman dumped tobacco spit on me and nothing happened to him after I reported it. Now the regs are taken too literal; an upperclass was punished for raising his voice to a plebe."

Midshipmen comments included

"The plebe indoctrination system is still effective but the limits on training are having a negative effect. Upperclass are being scared out of their training rights for fear of some dumb little infraction.

"Relaxing plebe indoc[trination] won't get rid of the different cases' that were investigated last year. It will just produce incompetent leaders.

"I do not feel the changes instituted in the Plebe Indoctrination system are justified or effective. . . . I am, however, glad I went through it the way it was—it was a rite of passage, but much more. I learned a lot about myself. I do not think that academic stress alone did (or could have done) what my plebe year experience accomplished. There was humiliation and sometimes idiotic meaningless duties to perform—but that was all part of breaking down my confidence in myself and then building it back up."

Although there has been no recent effort at the Air Force Academy on a scale comparable to the other academies to revamp the fourth class system, cadets there also made numerous comments regarding a perceived dilution in the rigor of the fourth class system. Typical critical comments included

"Don't mess with it. There are plenty of schools around where people can go and be treated like you would like this place to treat them. We are the last of a dying breed. Please, leave us alone, look away, and let the tradition continue.

"I don't feel that changing the fourth class system is really all that smart. I think it was fine the way it was, and now that it is being changed and restricted, it makes a lot of cadets resentful.

"All of the insane punishments have violated my right to have the toughest doolie year possible. I feel robbed of the tradition and pride from graduating from here."

But there were also some comments that raised many of the issues on the negative side of the fourth class system such as

"No plebe should ever have to. . . jump through hoops to get food. (USNA midshipman.)

"I don't believe in the fourth class system. It treats plebes like little kids. If you're treated like one you're going to act like one. There are also a few upperclass cadets who take advantage of the fourth class system for their own entertainment. (USMA cadet.)

"I love the goals of the Naval Academy, but I detest the negative way they're carried out. I hate the idea that a plebe can be walking anywhere and there are over 3000 upperclassmen who have the right to ream (yell at) him or her at will. And the plebe has to stand at attention and take it . . . hazing should definitely be a part of plebe summer. That's the nature of the military—to put extreme stresses on an individual, in unique circumstances. However, this should end at commencement of the academic year, so plebes could study." (USNA midshipman.)

Cadets and Midshipmen Hold Traditional Views Regarding the Fourth Class Year

In the face of such obviously deep-seated feelings about the fourth class system, the academies may not be fully successful in modifying the fourth class systems and eliminating hazing unless they gain the cooperation of cadets and midshipmen. A potential obstacle to securing that cooperation is that the majority of the cadets and midshipmen hold fairly traditional views regarding the purpose of the fourth class year.

As part of its review of the fourth class system at the Military Academy, the cadet committee held discussions in each of the 36 companies. One question they posed for discussion was whether the fourth class system should be primarily a development tool, primarily a rite of passage, or a combination. Although the committee found overwhelming support for a combination program, it was weighted toward the rite of passage conception.

We posed the same question to the cadets and midshipmen in our samples. Although views differ significantly across academies, they were fairly consistent in showing a higher proportion of upperclassmen relative to fourth class cadets and midshipmen indicating that fourth class year should be primarily a rite of passage. (See fig. 6.2.)

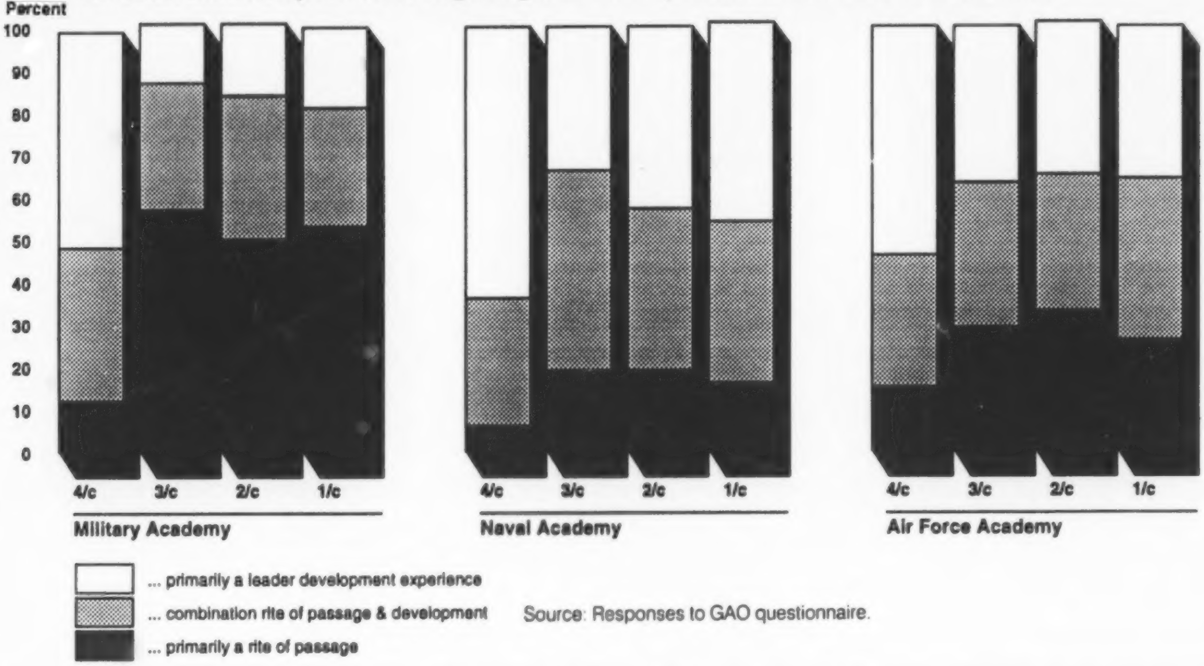


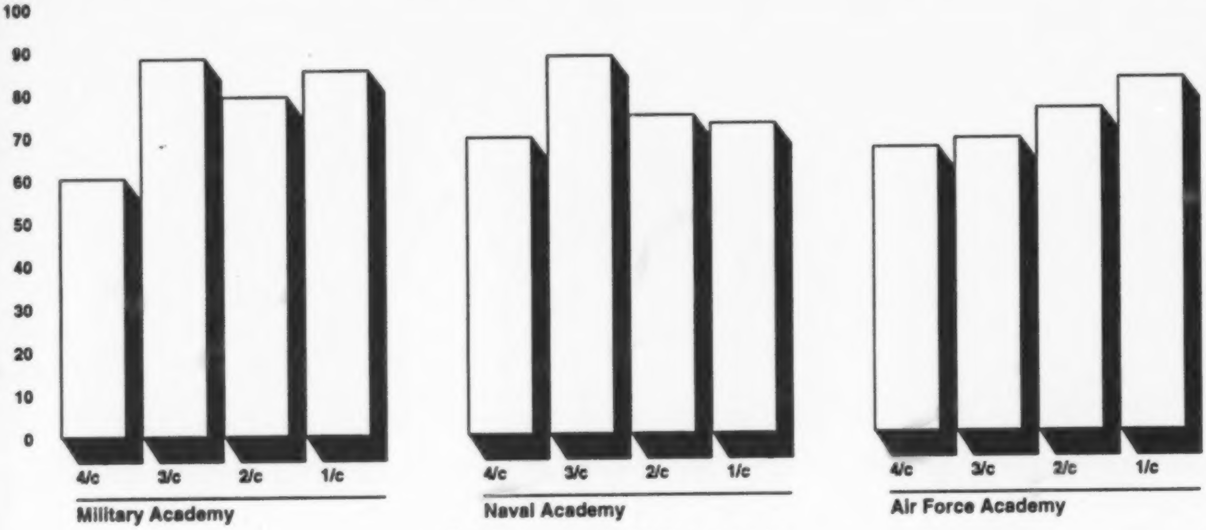
Figure 6.2: Cadet and Midshipman Views Regarding What the Emphasis of Fourth Class Year Should Be

Source: Responses to GAO questionnaire.

Screening Out Low Performers Not an Appropriate Student Role

Another indicator of potential resistance to changes in the fourth class system is the prevalent belief among all classes of cadets and midshipmen, but particularly among those in the upper classes, that the purpose of the fourth class year is to screen out those who do not belong. Figure 6.3 shows the percentage of cadets and midshipmen in each class who agreed or strongly agreed that the fourth class year should be used to identify and eliminate those who are not committed to the academy or cannot function under stress.

Figure 6.3: Percentage of Students Who Believe That Fourth Class Year Should Be Used to Screen Out Those Who Do Not Belong



Source: Responses to GAO questionnaire.

With such widespread agreement that the testing of commitment and ability to function under stress are legitimate functions, cadets and midshipmen may be tempted to take a more proactive role in the process than academy officials have authorized. The fact that many of the hazing-related cases involved cadets or midshipmen who were perceived as low performers is evidence that this is a problem. However, according to officials at each of the academies, it is not appropriate for students to screen out poor performers. The perception by some students that the purpose of the fourth class is to screen out poor performers increases the potential for hazing abuse.

Conclusions

Hazing-type treatment occurs more frequently at the three DOD service academies than the number of officially charged cases would imply. A correlation exists between hazing-type treatment and undesirable outcomes such as lower grade point averages, attrition from the academies, reduced career motivation, and increased levels of physical and psychological stress. In addition, there is no hard evidence that a rigorous, high-stress fourth class indoctrination program that includes the kinds of traditional activities that are prone to abuse is effective in producing quality officers. Evidence from a study of a comparable police academy environment indicates that a lower stress indoctrination program can have a beneficial impact on training effectiveness. Also, the differences between academy-produced officers and those from other commissioning programs are small, and at least partially the result of personnel policies that have favored academy graduates.

The recent changes that have been made at the Military and Naval academies appear to have had some success in reducing hazing-type treatment. However, some kinds of hazing-type treatment continue to exist. Eliminating any remaining elements of the fourth class systems at these academies that do not contribute in a positive way to the objectives of the indoctrination program would enhance the academies' programs. The Air Force Academy has not conducted an in-depth review of its fourth class indoctrination system, similar in breadth and scope to those conducted at the other academies.

The distinction between hazing and legitimate fourth class indoctrination was somewhat unclear at all three academies. Hazing often occurs when upperclassmen exceed the authorized bounds of the fourth class indoctrination system. Since such hazing is often a matter of degree, traditional elements of the fourth class system will probably always be subject to potential abuse. This is particularly true since many cadets and midshipmen believe that the fourth class year should be used to identify and eliminate those who are not committed to the academy or cannot function effectively under pressure.

Our findings indicate a need to clarify the objectives of the fourth class system to rid it of elements that do not serve those objectives and a need to sharpen the definition of hazing and make it clear that screening out perceived low performers is not an appropriate student role. Specific, measurable objectives could also serve to ensure that the indoctrination program does not last longer than necessary to accomplish those objectives, thereby addressing the concerns raised by some faculty, staff, alumni, and current students.

Enforcing the prohibition against hazing is another area that warrants improvement. Relatively few incidents of hazing-type offenses were formally charged as hazing, and academy officials have usually chosen to pursue such offenses using a lesser charge. There were indications that the potential punishment of separation might be viewed as too severe in many cases, which could explain the tendency to downgrade the charges. Thus, more explicit enforcement and punishment policies—including prevention-oriented punishments for first time, minor offenses—could be developed.

In addition, cadets and midshipmen may refrain from reporting incidents of hazing for fear of reprisal. The prevention and reporting of incidents of hazing-type treatment are specific duties of the cadet and midshipman chains of command, not the recipient of that treatment. Also, since members of the chain of command may be involved in the hazing allegation, alternative reporting channels could be made available. Finally, those who report hazing incidents must be protected from reprisals.

Many cadets, midshipmen, and alumni hold strongly traditional views regarding the purpose of the fourth class year. Consequently, the academies are likely to encounter considerable resistance to changing the fourth class system.

Recommendations

We recommend that the Secretary of Defense ensure that the Military and Naval academies continue to clarify the objectives of their fourth class indoctrination systems and apply the question, "How is this activity related to the development of a professional military officer?" to eliminate remaining elements that serve no demonstrated developmental purpose.

We also recommend that the Secretary of Defense ensure that the Air Force Academy conduct a thorough assessment of its fourth class system, similar in scope and scale to the reviews conducted at the Military and Naval academies. Specific attention should be paid to clarifying the goals of the indoctrination system, articulating specific developmental roles for all four classes, eliminating negative leadership techniques, and eliminating or reducing those elements of the traditional fourth class indoctrination system that are prone to abuse or have little relationship to the development of future officers.

To decrease the likelihood of cadets and midshipmen engaging in hazing-type treatment, we recommend that the academy superintendents

- clarify the distinctions between hazing and spirit-related activities and the limits on traditional fourth class indoctrination activities;

- make it clear to cadets and midshipmen that it is not their function to screen out those who they do not think belong, because that function legitimately resides only with academy officials; and
- set the length of the fourth class indoctrination period to the amount of time necessary to achieve specific objectives.

To improve enforcement of the prohibition against hazing, we recommend that the academy superintendents

- develop an explicit policy on how hazing will be handled and take decisive action using the appropriate charge when hazing is identified;
- make it a specific responsibility of the cadet or midshipman chain of command to prevent and report hazing treatment rather than relying on the recipients of that treatment to report it;
- for first-offense, hazing-type practices of lesser seriousness, consider establishing punishments that prevent reoccurrence such as suspending the offender's involvement in fourth class indoctrination;
- alleviate the reticence of cadets and midshipmen to report hazing-related activities by establishing legitimate alternative reporting channels to the chain of command; and
- protect those who report hazing activity by imposing harsh punishments for anyone taking reprisals against those who report incidents.

To increase the likelihood of success in eliminating hazing, we recommend that the academy superintendents facilitate the acceptance of change by educating the students, faculty, staff, and alumni on the necessity for change and involving them in the process.

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

DOD stated that abuse can occur in any human interaction process involving authority. DOD also stated that it would work in conjunction with the services to continually refine the understanding of what constitutes approved behavior. DOD believes that the academies will be able to gain cadet and midshipmen cooperation to evolutionary changes to the fourth class systems.

DOD acknowledged that while the other commissioning programs incorporate some elements in their military curricula similar to those in the fourth class systems, these other programs do not include the full range of the academy fourth class systems. DOD stated that the intent of the fourth class systems is to develop military responsiveness ("followership") skills considered to be a prerequisite to understanding the appropriate exercise of authority. DOD agreed that additional measures of effectiveness to evaluate the fourth class systems were desirable.

DOD stated that offenses that were not strictly hazing were adequately punished under other disciplinary regulations. However, as we have noted earlier, various inspector general investigations as well as our own review of specific cases have concluded that some cases that appear to be hazing have not been charged as such. The academies appear to focus their enforcement attention primarily upon cases of physical hazing. In cases in which the hazing-type treatment was more verbal or humiliating in nature, the academies tended to classify them as something other than instances of hazing.

DOD agreed with the recommendation that the academies clarify both the distinctions between hazing and spirit-related activities and the limits on traditional fourth class indoctrination activities. DOD stated that the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Military Manpower and Personnel Policy) was working closely with the academy superintendents and would continue to ensure that these distinctions were understood. DOD also concurred with our recommendation that the academies make it clear to cadets and midshipmen that it is not their role to screen out those who they think do not belong. DOD stated that commissioned officer oversight is intended to prevent students from usurping this screening role.

DOD partially concurred with the recommendation that the academies continue to eliminate elements of their fourth class indoctrination systems that serve no demonstrated developmental purpose. DOD stated that it considered the awareness of the need to oversee and modify the fourth class systems to be adequate and that ongoing review would produce needed refinements. DOD noted that over the last 2 years it had expanded its oversight of officer accession programs in general, and the academies in particular, and that it would continue to work with the services to clarify and improve the objectives of the fourth class systems.

DOD did not agree that the Air Force Academy needed to conduct a review of its fourth class indoctrination system similar in scope to those conducted by the other academies. DOD stated that it would ensure that adequate oversight of the academies was exercised, indicating that it would review the annual reviews of the fourth class systems at the academies, starting in the 1992-93 academic year.

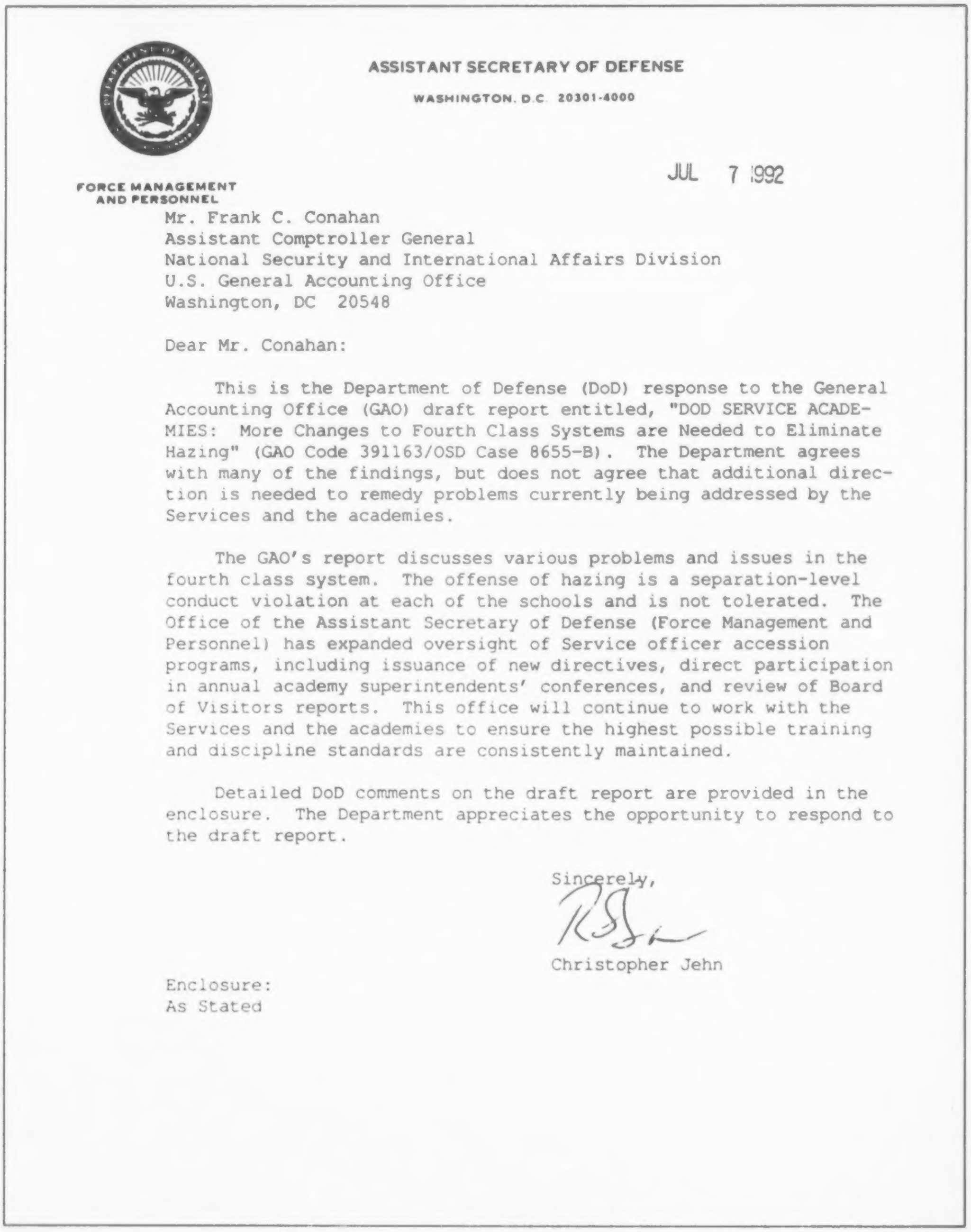
DOD stated that it believed existing academy regulations adequately govern the actions required in cases of hazing. DOD also stated that existing regulations already required all cadets and midshipmen to report conduct violations and that failure to do so constituted a conduct violation. While we acknowledge that academy regulations do require such reporting, those regulations have been in place for many years and, as our review has shown, many incidents have gone unreported. Specifically citing the responsibility of the chain of command to protect the fourth class from abusive treatment may heighten the awareness of this obligation among cadets and midshipmen.

DOD stated that the academies currently take action to remove those who abuse the fourth class system from leadership roles and participation in training events involving the fourth class. While we found this to be true of more serious cases, those who committed lesser offenses often continued to play a key role in the indoctrination of fourth class students. Punishments such as short suspensions from involvement in fourth class indoctrination, may be an effective way to signal that the academy takes student treatment very seriously and put individual violators on notice.

DOD did not agree that the academies need to establish legitimate alternative reporting channels for those who fear repercussions from reporting. DOD noted that alternative channels, in the form of the service and DOD inspector general offices, already exist. We have found with regard to reporting harassment, however, that many cadets and midshipmen were either unaware of these offices or did not believe they would be effective. Since it is likely that fourth class students might lack awareness or trust in the inspector general offices, the senior noncommissioned officers who are used as an alternative reporting channel for harassment could serve the same function with regard to hazing-type treatment.

Finally, DOD did not agree that it was necessary to take any further actions to protect those reporting hazing activities from reprisals because reprisals are already considered a serious disciplinary violation. However, we found fear of reprisal to be widespread among fourth class students. Placing additional emphasis on protection from retaliation may heighten the awareness of the prohibition and demonstrate the academy's resolve to protect fourth class students.

Comments From the Department of Defense



ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000

FORCE MANAGEMENT
AND PERSONNEL

JUL 7 1992

Mr. Frank C. Conahan
Assistant Comptroller General
National Security and International Affairs Division
U.S. General Accounting Office
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Conahan:

This is the Department of Defense (DoD) response to the General Accounting Office (GAO) draft report entitled, "DOD SERVICE ACADEMIES: More Changes to Fourth Class Systems are Needed to Eliminate Hazing" (GAO Code 391163/OSD Case 8655-B). The Department agrees with many of the findings, but does not agree that additional direction is needed to remedy problems currently being addressed by the Services and the academies.

The GAO's report discusses various problems and issues in the fourth class system. The offense of hazing is a separation-level conduct violation at each of the schools and is not tolerated. The Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Force Management and Personnel) has expanded oversight of Service officer accession programs, including issuance of new directives, direct participation in annual academy superintendents' conferences, and review of Board of Visitors reports. This office will continue to work with the Services and the academies to ensure the highest possible training and discipline standards are consistently maintained.

Detailed DoD comments on the draft report are provided in the enclosure. The Department appreciates the opportunity to respond to the draft report.

Sincerely,

Christopher Jehn

Enclosure:
As Stated

GAO DRAFT REPORT - DATED APRIL 15, 1992
(GAO CODE 391163) OSD CASE 8655-B

"DOD SERVICE ACADEMIES: MORE CHANGES TO FOURTH CLASS SYSTEMS ARE NEEDED TO ELIMINATE HAZING"

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE COMMENTS

- **FINDING A: Fourth Class System and Hazing.** The GAO reported that, over the past 20 years, the Service academies have provided about 10.5 percent of annual officer accessions. The GAO observed that students at the academies undergo a rigorous 4-year program comprised of (1) academics, (2) military training, and (3) physical conditioning, with the officers graduating from the academies long having been considered the standard for military professionalism. The GAO found that each of the academies operates a fourth class system to indoctrinate freshmen (referred to as fourth class cadets or midshipmen) into the academy and provide a leadership laboratory to train upper-class students. The GAO explained that the fourth class year consists of initial summer training and academic year training. The GAO noted that the purpose of the fourth class system is to help students transition from civilian or enlisted life, and to promote such characteristics as self-discipline, professional knowledge, physical fitness, ethics, and teamwork, through a demanding and intense environment. The GAO found that, over the years, each of the academies has built up a variety of traditional practices regarding the treatment of fourth class students. The GAO also reported that many of the traditional practices subject fourth class cadets and midshipmen to some degree of stress and discomfort. The GAO referenced a 1975 report, in which it was noted that it was difficult to differentiate hazing from activities permitted under the various fourth class systems. The 1975 report also identified a number of traditional fourth class system activities that could be perceived as hazing. The GAO noted that, in commenting on the prior report, Department of Defense (DoD) and Service officials had stated that, while individuals undergoing training programs or outsiders may perceive certain activities as hazing, such activities actually served a legitimate training function and were continually scrutinized to ensure that they contributed positively to the training mission.

  The GAO reported that in addition, in the fourth class systems, the upper classes take on major responsibility for training and indoctrinating the fourth class cadets and midshipmen, but sometimes overstep the intended boundary between legitimate

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fourth class indoctrination and hazing. The GAO found that hazing at the academies has a long history, dating back to the Civil War era at the Military and Naval Academies. The GAO noted that, at times, hazing had gotten out of hand--resulting in deaths and serious injuries.

Now on pp. 10-14.

The GAO reported that, in 1874, the Congress passed legislation outlawing hazing at the Naval Academy, and that today, Title 10 of the U.S. Code prohibits hazing at all three Service academies. (pp. 1-2, pp. 11-17/ GAO Draft Report)

DOD RESPONSE: Concur.

- **FINDING B**: **Naval Academy**. The GAO reported the fourth class system at the Naval Academy includes customs and practices that have been in existence for many years. The GAO found that plebes traditionally have been required (1) to move at double-time down the center of hallways in Bancroft Hall, (2) to square their corners by pivoting at a 90-degree angle, and (3) to "sound-off" with spirit-related phrases. The GAO reported that another tradition is the requirement that plebes memorize certain facts and information called fourth class knowledge or "plebe rates." The GAO observed that some upperclassmen questioned plebes on their forth class knowledge in a harsh, impolite manner--and, if a plebe was unable to recite his fourth class knowledge, he or she could be given demerits, be required to do calisthenics, or be required to report to an upperclassman's room to demonstrate they have rectified their deficiency. The GAO further observed that mealtimes were also a period of stress for plebes, who were required to eat at attention, sitting on the edge of their chair, et cetera. The GAO concluded that it was during meals where much of the questioning of plebes would take place about their fourth class knowledge.

The GAO also reported that the fourth class indoctrination instruction in place during the 1989-1990 academic year stated that all forms of hazing were strictly prohibited, and defined hazing as "any unauthorized assumption of authority by a midshipman whereby another midshipman suffers or is exposed to any cruelty, indignity, undue humiliation, hardship, or oppression, or the deprivation or abridgement of any right." [Underscoring supplied.] The GAO noted the definition varied from that cited in the statute prohibiting hazing (10 U.S.C. 6964) by the addition of the underscored word. The GAO reported that the Naval Academy instruction on fourth class indoctrination states there is a clear boundary between military discipline and harassment. The GAO concluded, however, that the instruction does little to specify where that boundary is. The GAO also reported that a team of investigators from the Navy Inspector General's office concluded that the definition of hazing was not well understood by the midshipmen.

The GAO also reported that, in mid-1990, the Navy Inspector General conducted a climate assessment of the Naval Academy. The GAO noted the inspection team concluded that many of the offenses it reviewed appeared to meet the definition of hazing and would be labeled as such by the general public and Members of the Congress. The GAO also noted that a July 1990 Department of Defense Inspector General investigation into a case of alleged hazing at the Naval Academy concluded that the case did involve hazing. The GAO concluded that hazing-type treatment occurs more frequently at the Naval Academy than the number of officially charged cases would imply. (pp. 2-3, pp. 20-26, pp. 86-87/ GAO Draft Report)

Now on pp. 15-18.

DOD RESPONSE: **Partially concur** . Use of the term "hazing-type treatment" is problematic throughout the GAO report, since it is never defined. The term can and does mean different things to different people. Theoretically, any aggressive training regime could be construed as "hazing-type treatment" while not actually being hazing, which is more clearly defined. This confusion pervades the entire GAO report.

- **FINDING C**: **Recent Naval Academy Attempts to Control Hazing**. The GAO reported that, on May 26, 1990, the Superintendent of the Naval Academy issued General Order No. 1-90, implemented by regulations. The GAO also found that, on July 13, 1990, the Commandant of Midshipmen issued a memorandum on the Naval Academy policy regarding hazing, which was incorporated into the midshipman regulations a month later. The GAO noted that memorandum quoted the statutory prohibition against hazing and spelled out in some detail the terms used in the statute. The GAO further noted that the memorandum also established principles to guide midshipmen in the exercise of authority over other midshipmen. The GAO found that the Naval Academy made additional changes to its fourth class indoctrination system for the 1991-1992 academic year--and, therefore, the 1991-1992 fourth class indoctrination instruction contains more specifics aimed at defining appropriate and inappropriate plebe treatment.

The GAO reported there is some indication that the recent changes to the Naval Academy fourth class system have had a positive effect on performance. The GAO noted that, according to the officer in charge of the Naval Academy plebe indoctrination program, the current plebe class (the Class of 1995) showed very high levels of motivation and performance. The GAO also pointed out that the plebe summer attrition was only about 4 percent, which is significantly lower than it has been in the past.

The GAO noted that its questionnaire was administered at the Naval Academy in late November 1990, after the first round of new regulations had been in place for several months, but before the additional 1991-1992 changes were made. The GAO concluded that the result of its survey also appeared to indicate that the efforts of the Naval Academy to eliminate hazing have had some success. The GAO observed, however, that in some areas there was no improvement. (pp. 2-3, pp. 26-31/GAO Draft Report)

Now on pp. 19-24.

DOD RESPONSE: **Partially concur**. The Department does not agree with the statement that in some areas there was no improvement. This statement is not supported by evidence. The Naval Academy regulations pertaining to this finding have been provided to the GAO, and also are provided as an attachment to this response.

- **FINDING D: Midshipmen Views on Hazing**. The GAO reported that, in the fall of 1990, what constituted hazing was still unclear to a sizeable number of midshipmen. The GAO explained that about one-third of the midshipmen surveyed either agreed or strongly agreed that the distinction between allowable fourth class indoctrination and hazing was not clear to them. The GAO also reported that midshipmen were asked, regardless of whether they experienced a given type of treatment, to indicate whether each type of treatment should be allowed to occur or not occur at the Naval Academy. The GAO noted that 11 of 21 practices were seen as inappropriate by 40 percent or more of the midshipmen. The GAO pointed out that the practices seen as inappropriate by the most midshipmen were (1) having to use study hours to perform fourth class duties, (2) having to miss a meal to recite fourth class knowledge, and (3) being subjected to physical intimidation. Based on its survey, the GAO concluded that the distinction between hazing and legitimate fourth class indoctrination was somewhat unclear at the Naval Academy. (pp. 2-3, pp. 32-33, pp. 86-87/GAO Draft Report)

Now on pp. 25-27.

DoD RESPONSE: **Concur**. The ability to distinguish what constitutes abuse of authority is one of the goals of the fourth class system, and underclassmen will be tentative in their ability to distinguish between hazing and legitimate indoctrination. This is recognized as a part of the process of effective leadership training at the academies.

- FINDING E: **Air Force Academy**. The GAO reported that, to develop a sense of accomplishment and pride in the Air Force and the Academy, fourth class cadets are required to learn specific professional items verbatim. The GAO found that, in addition, Air Force cadets are required to be familiar with rote knowledge requirements. The GAO observed that the rationale given is the practice is similar to procedures that must be memorized exactly as written by aircrew members to prepare them for aircraft emergencies. The GAO also reported that mealtimes at the academy are one of the most structured situations. The GAO found that corrections to table duties and table decorum can be made until the end of the meals. The GAO noted, however, that the table commandant is responsible for ensuring that cadets have the opportunity to eat a full meal.

  The GAO reported that Cadet Wing Regulation 537-6 prescribes standards of personal and professional conduct applying to all cadets, and that the regulation defines hazing, noting that violation can result in disenrollment. The GAO reported that, for the 3-year academic period from the fall of 1987 through the spring of 1990, there were 146 Commandant Disciplinary Board cases and 47 Military Review Committee cases. During its review of those cases, the GAO identified nine that appeared to be hazing-related. The GAO noted, however, that the offending cadets in all nine cases were retained at the academy. The GAO concluded that hazing-type treatment occurs more frequently at the Air Force Academy than the number of officially charged cases would imply. The GAO also concluded that the distinction between hazing and legitimate fourth class indoctrination is somewhat unclear at the Air Force Academy. (pp. 2-3, pp. 34-43, pp. 86-87/ GAO Draft Report)

Now on pp. 29-32.

  DOD RESPONSE: Concur.

- FINDING F: **Frequency of Hazing Type Treatment at the Air Force Academy**. The GAO reported that hazing-type treatment appears to be relatively common at the Air Force Academy. The GAO explained that 50 percent or more of the fourth class cadets indicated that they had been subject to ten of the 21 types of fourth class treatment surveyed, at least a couple of times a month. The GAO observed it appears that the level of hazing-type treatment has been fairly stable across the four classes, with a slight pattern of higher levels being reported by the most recent class. The GAO found no indications that specific subgroups, such as women, members of racial, ethnic, or religious minorities, or athletes were subject to any more or less of the hazing-type treatment than others.

The GAO reported that the Air Officers Commanding and Group Air Officers Commanding acknowledge that hazing-type treatment was fairly common. The GAO also found that for 12 of the 21 types of treatment, 70 percent or more of those personnel responded that such treatment was against current regulations. The GAO observed that some confusion regarding what is allowed does appear to exist among the cadets: overall, 40 percent of the cadets, including 56 percent of the fourth class cadets, 42 percent of the third class, 30 percent of the second class, and 32 percent to the first class, indicated that the distinction between allowable fourth class indoctrination and hazing was not clear to them. The GAO concluded that the Air Force Academy has not conducted an in-depth review of its fourth class indoctrination system, similar in breadth and scope to those conducted at the other academies. (pp. 2-3, pp. 40-43, p. 87/GAO Draft Report)

Now on pp. 33-40.

DOD RESPONSE: **Partially concur**. The Air Force Academy annually reviews the fourth class system. Although its review is not conducted by external agencies, the results are no less significant than those from reviews of the other academies. In the past 2 academic years, the fourth class review at the Air Force Academy has (1) reduced fourth class training hours (by more than 50 percent in 1990-91), (2) shifted training responsibility of third class cadets from unsupervised to supervised roles and (3) issued new regulations governing, among other activities, training during meals, which has been restricted to the first 10 minutes of each meal. (see also DoD response to finding D.)

- FINDING G: **Military Academy**. The GAO reported that traditional fourth class life at West Point is highly regimented. For example, the GAO noted that, while inside, fourth class cadets are expected to walk in a military manner, 120 steps per minute, and in buildings, they are to walk close to the walls and "hug" the wall to allow an upperclass cadet or officer to pass. The GAO reported that dining hall procedures also are highly structured. The GAO noted that each table has a table commandant who, as the representative of the chain of command, is responsible for the conduct and decorum of the cadets assigned to his/her table. The GAO found that fourth class cadets also were required to know and recite "fourth class knowledge." The GAO noted that, according to the Fourth Class System Circular, fourth class knowledge contributed to cadet development. The GAO found that the circular also provided a time-sequenced list of specific knowledge requirements and where the information could be obtained. The GAO noted that a fourth class cadet could get up to eight punishment tours for failure to know the required knowledge.

Now on pp. 41-45.

The GAO reported that, from July 1, 1989 to June 30, 1990, four cadets were found to have committed "hazing" and four were found to have committed "abuse of the Fourth Class System." The GAO review of the Military Academy disciplinary cases, however, identified several other cases that appeared to be hazing-related, but were charged using other disciplinary offense codes. The GAO concluded that hazing-type treatment occurs more frequently at the Military Academy that the number of officially charged cases would imply. (pp. 2-3, pp. 44-50, pp. 86-87/ GAO Draft Report)

DOD RESPONSE: **Partially concur**. As in previous findings, the determination of "hazing" in disciplinary hearings has been made by the academies. The determination of "hazing-type treatment" is uniquely applied by the GAO in this review, and is not defined.

- **FINDING H**: **Fourth Class System at Military Academy Overhauled in 1990**. The GAO reported that, in 1989, as part of an in-depth reassessment of virtually all aspects of academy life, the Superintendent of the Military Academy commissioned three independent reviews of the fourth class system by separate committees of cadets, the Association of Graduates, and the staff and faculty. The GAO found that the three reviews arrived at substantially the same conclusion--the fourth class system was in need of major change. The GAO noted that the cadet committee report cited the three major problem areas, as follows:

  - first, the fourth class system failed to create an atmosphere of development in either the fourth class year or the upperclass years;

  - second, the system allowed both unprofessional and unnecessary activities to take place, and

  - third, the large gap between the fourth class and the upper three classes created an unhealthy "we vs. them" environment.

The GAO noted that the faculty and staff report saw the traditional stress-imposing practices of the fourth class system as suffering from two main flaws--(1) the use of inappropriate leadership behavior as the primary vehicle for imposing stress on fourth class cadets and (2) the mistaken assumption that adaptation to one form of stress is transferable to other forms. The GAO pointed out that the faculty and staff reports also noted

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that past attempts at reform had been limited to eliminating specific practices (such as "bracing"), rather than systematically addressing the underlying relationship between plebes and upper-class cadets that gives rise to such practices.

The GAO reported that the Military Academy embarked on overhauling the system along the lines recommended by the three studies. The GAO found that, in August 1990, the new Cadet Leader Development System was introduced. The GAO pointed out that a significant feature of that system is its effort to establish a climate that is free of the abuses and dysfunctional aspects of the old fourth class system. (pp. 2-3, pp. 50-54/GAO Draft Report)

Now on pp. 45-47.

DOD RESPONSE: Concur.

- **FINDING I**: **Hazing-Type Treatment at the Military Academy Appears to Have Been Reduced, But Some Forms Remain**. The GAO reported that the fourth class cadets at the Military Academy reported a lower frequency than the other classes on 15 of the 21 types of fourth class treatment. The GAO observed it appears that the new rules are having the desired effect of reducing inappropriate treatment of plebes. The GAO also reported that no clear pattern emerged regarding subgroups that may be subject to more hazing-type treatment than others--that, overall, self-reported experience of hazing-type treatment did not vary significantly by gender, race, Hispanic origin, religion or athlete status.

  The GAO also reported that, on the discouraging side, certain kinds of hazing-type treatment appear to be continuing at a relatively high frequency of occurrence. The GAO observed that the continuation of such activities at relatively high rates could mean that not all the changes have been fully accepted by the cadets and that it may take some time for them to become fully institutionalized. The GAO noted, however, that it administered its survey of West Point cadets about two-thirds of the way through the first year under the new fourth class system, and some confusion regarding the new rules could be expected. The GAO found that the distinction between allowable fourth class indoctrination practices and hazing appeared to be more clear among the commandant's staff.

  The GAO also reported that, in general, fourth class cadets were more likely than upperclass cadets to indicate that a given practice should not be allowed. The GAO found that, for 14 of 21 practices it surveyed, half or more of the fourth class cadets reported that the practice should not be allowed to occur at the Military Academy. The GAO also noted that more than half of the cadets, including fourth class cadets, indicate some practices that have been banned should be allowable (e.g., screaming in a plebe's face). The GAO concluded that the distinction between hazing and legitimate fourth class indoctrination was still somewhat unclear at the Military Academy. (pp. 2-3, pp. 54-58, pp. 86-87/GAO Draft Report)

Now on pp. 47-54.

DOD RESPONSE: **Concur**. As noted in the DoD responses to previous findings, the distinction made by cadets between hazing and legitimate fourth class indoctrination is a reason for implementing the fourth class system as presently structured.

- FINDING J: **Physical and Psychological Effects of Hazing**. The GAO reported the view that hazing-type treatment is benign for many cadets and midshipmen fails to recognize the serious effects such activities can have on others. The GAO observed that, over the years, there have been numerous incidents demonstrating the potentially harmful effect that hazing can have on the physical and psychological well-being of cadets and midshipmen.

  The GAO questionnaire included items aimed at assessing how often respondents experienced various physical (15 items) and psychological (eight items) symptoms. The GAO transformed those stress and hazing scales into categories of low, average, and high. The GAO found that for the fourth class cadets and midshipmen at all three academies, greater exposure to hazing-type activities was associated with higher levels of physical and psychological stress. The GAO concluded, therefore, that a strong correlation exists between self-reported frequency of exposure to hazing-type treatment and the number of negative outcomes, such as higher levels of physical and psychological stress. (p. 2, pp. 59-61/ GAO Draft Report)

Now on pp. 55-58.

DOD RESPONSE: **Partially concur**. There is no doubt that hazing is harmful to cadet and midshipman well-being, which is why hazing is prohibited. Conversely, stress is recognized as necessary in the training environment to prepare for Military Service as an officer. The GAO conclusion that greater frequency of self-reported stress levels correlates with increased exposure to "hazing-related" activities is logical; however, it does not lend itself to independent validation of the statement that such activities are the sole cause of higher stress.

- FINDING K: **The Effect of Hazing on Academics**. The GAO reported that the review by the Military Academy Association of Graduates concluded that the fourth class system consumed too much of the plebe's time and conflicted with the goals of the academic program. The GAO noted that a number of members from each of the academies made comments concerning the negative effect of fourth class activities on academics. The GAO also reported that some students at the academies identified fourth class duties as a factor inhibiting their academic performance. The GAO found that research findings also demonstrate that academy environments can hamper high aptitude students from applying their intellectual abilities--for example, a study of two groups of U.S. Coast Guard Academy cadets showed that stress generated by interactions with cadet and officer superiors reduced the relationship between academic ability (as measured by Scholastic Aptitude Test scores) and grade point average. The GAO also reported a fairly high consensus among the fourth class students and faculty at the Naval and Air Force Academies indicated that priority tends to be given to learning fourth class knowledge, while at the Military Academy, a smaller percentage of respondents reported fourth class knowledge taking precedence over homework. The GAO also noted that those fourth class cadets and midshipmen at all three academies, who reported experiencing a higher frequency of hazing-type treatment, tended to think more frequently about resigning from the academy. The GAO noted that, at each academy, the commandant's staff was the least likely to agree that homework was subordinated to fourth class knowledge. The GAO concluded that, in general, the more hazing-type treatment a fourth class cadet had been exposed to, the lower his or her grade point average tended to be, particularly at the Air Force Academy. The GAO also concluded that a strong correlation exists between self-reported frequency of exposure to hazing-type treatment and attrition from the academies. Finally, the GAO concluded that anything that is likely to increase attrition should be of great concern to academy officials. (p. 2, p. 5, p. 59, pp. 64-65/GAO Draft Report)

Now on pp. 58-63.

DOD RESPONSE: Concur.

- **FINDING L**: **The Effect of Hazing on Intent to Make the Military a Career**. The GAO reported its survey indicated that, among fourth class cadets at the Military Academy and midshipmen at the Naval Academy, there is a slight tendency for those who experienced more hazing-type treatment to be more likely to indicate they probably or definitely would not make the military a career. The GAO noted that the amount of hazing-type treatment received appears to have had no effect on the career interest of Air Force Academy fourth class cadets. Respondents were also asked whether their motivation to make the military a career had changed since they entered the academy. The GAO found that the amount of hazing-type treatment received by the fourth class cadets and midshipmen at all three academies was directly related to decreased motivation to make the military a career. The GAO also reported that treatment during the fourth class year may also have a residual effect on the career intent of those who complete their academy programs. For example, in a Military Academy survey of the Class of 1988, only 38 percent agreed that the fourth class system had a positive effect on their commitment to the Army. The GAO concluded that, at all three academies, the greater the amount of hazing-type treatment received during the fourth class year, the more likely the upperclass cadets and midshipmen were to indicate that their motivation toward a military career had decreased. The GAO also concluded that, in general, those who have been exposed to more hazing-type treatment during their fourth class year tend to experience a decline in their motivation toward a military career. (p. 2, p. 5, pp. 65-67/GAO Draft Report)

Now on pp. 63-66.

DOD RESPONSE: **Partially concur.** The positive correlation between "hazing-type" treatment and diminished career motivation is logical. The fact that the academy programs involve artificially imposed stress derives from the requirement to train, as well as educate, military officers capable of functioning within a stressful environment. The Department concludes, therefore, that some attrition may be necessary to preclude those not adaptable from entering active service, and that such attrition should occur before, rather than after, entering regular commissioned active duty.

- **FINDING M**: **Better Definition of Hazing Is Needed**. The GAO observed many of the practices that it labeled as hazing-type activities are permitted, within limits, by the rules of the fourth class indoctrination systems. The GAO maintained, however, that hazing can occur when those limits are exceeded. The GAO found that the distinction between hazing and approved fourth class indoctrination is not a matter of simple black or white comparison, but rather it involves a more difficult and subjective assessment of different shades of grey. The GAO noted that some of the activities the GAO referred to as hazing-type treatment, such as being sprayed with water or hit with water balloons, are viewed by many academy officials and students as relatively harmless, spirit-related pranks. The GAO noted that the officials felt that, since class identification is very strong at the academies, such pranks and hijinx are often of the class against class variety. The GAO observed that the fact that an activity has been directed at the fourth class is not, by itself, sufficient to classify that activity as hazing. The GAO held that the misuse of formally granted authority is the distinguishing characteristic: that is, if a fourth class cadet or midshipman is required, under a stated or implied threat of punishment for noncompliance, to submit to humiliating or demeaning treatment that is forbidden or exceeds authorized levels, then that activity probably should be classified as hazing. The GAO observed that, on the other hand, in class versus class, spirit-related activities, where the fourth class is free to resist or retaliate in kind, the activities might not be hazing. The GAO concluded, however, that if specific individuals are singled out and subject to significantly more of such spirit-related treatment than their peers, such targeted harassment may very well be a case of hazing.

The GAO reported that the proportion of cadets and midshipmen indicating that the distinction between allowable fourth class indoctrination and improper fourth class treatment or hazing was unclear was 33 percent at the Naval Academy, 41 percent at the Air Force Academy, and 48 percent at the Military Academy. The GAO observed those figures may indicate that the academies need to sharpen the definition of hazing in their regulations. Because hazing often occurs when upperclassmen exceed the authorized bounds of the fourth class indoctrination system, the GAO concluded that traditional elements of the fourth class system will probably always be subject to potential abuse--since such hazing is often a matter of degree. (p. 2, p. 5, pp. 69-70, p. 87/GAO Draft Report)

Now on pp. 67-68.

DOD RESPONSE: **Concur**. In any human interaction process involving authority, abuse is likely to occur, particularly when the organization mission or intent is training. The Department will work in conjunction with the Services on continually refining the understanding of what constitutes approved behavior.

- **FINDING N**: **Traditional Elements of Fourth Class System Need Recurring Assessment**. The GAO reported that certain elements of the traditional fourth class system are readily perceived by individuals or the general public as hazing. The GAO held that, given the difficulty in defining precise limits for such elements, they are inherently subject to potential abuse--which, in turn, creates a need for continual assessment to ensure that fourth class indoctrination achieves its objectives while minimizing undesirable side effects.

  - **The Rationale for Some Traditional Fourth Class Practices Appears Questionable**. The GAO found that the academies currently relate certain elements of fourth class treatment to some activity in the active service. The GAO observed that such rationales could be questioned, since relatively low level skills are involved and fourth class training is so far removed in time from the active duty requirements they are purportedly related to. In addition, the GAO noted such activities are not part of the other officer commissioning programs that generally produce over 85 percent of new officers. The GAO also observed that preparing plebes to be prisoners-of-war is not a legitimate rationale for hazing at the academies.

- **The Necessity for Rigorous Fourth Class Indoctrination Has Not Been Demonstrated**. The GAO noted that advocates of a rigorous fourth class indoctrination system believe that it has been very effective in developing leaders. The GAO observed that the belief has been accepted largely as an article of faith. The GAO found that there has been very little research into the effects of various kinds of officer training programs. The only study the GAO could identify dealing specifically with the relationship between the intensity of academy-type indoctrination and the quality of the graduates produced found that less stressful police recruit training resulted in better performing police officers.

The GAO also observed that, if a rigorous fourth class system were an indispensable necessity for producing effective officers, one would expect academy-produced officers to outperform officers commissioned through other programs, where initial indoctrination is of shorter duration and lower intensity. The GAO noted, however, that the differences between academy-produced officers and those from other commissioning programs are small, and at least partially the result of personnel policies that have favored academy graduates. The GAO concluded that there is a need to clarify the objectives of the fourth class system to rid it of elements that do not serve those objectives. (p. 2, p. 5, pp. 71-75, pp. 87-88/GAO Draft Report)

Now on pp. 68-71.

DOD RESPONSE: **Partially concur**. The intent of the academy fourth class systems lies within the larger mission of leadership training through the four years of the academy process. While training future officers in prisoner-of-war scenarios is no justification for hazing, neither is any other element of the program. Hazing is never justified, although prisoner-of-war orientation is legitimately in the military training program. Also, while they do not include the full range of the academy fourth class systems, each of the other commissioning programs incorporates similar elements in their military curricula. The

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completion of the fourth class (plebe) summer and the first academic year typically is followed by a recognition of the fourth classmen as full-fledged members of the corps/brigade/wing of cadets/midshipmen. The process has an intent of developing military responsiveness ("followership") skills, and is considered a prerequisite to understanding appropriate exercise of authority. The Department agrees that additional measures of effectiveness to evaluate the system might be useful. Finally, the Department continues to object to the often repeated GAO assertion that academy graduates are recipients of preferential personnel and assignment policies, and that such policies are the sole reason for superior professional performance of graduates. The assertion is untrue, and should be deleted unless there is documentation or additional proof of its veracity.

- FINDING O: **Mixed Views About the Length of the Fourth Class Indoctrination Period**. The GAO reported that, traditionally, the fourth class indoctrination period has run until the first class cadets and midshipmen graduate. The GAO noted that, recently, there have been a number of suggestions that the academies reduce the length of the fourth class year. (For example, in 1990, the DoD Inspector General recommended that the Navy reconsider the entire concept of plebe year, stating that the two months of plebe summer may provide a sufficient period of indoctrination for fourth classmen.) The GAO also noted that some academy faculty members commented that the plebe indoctrination period should be shortened. The GAO found that, at the Military Academy, the staff and faculty committee proposed the recognition of fourth class cadets as full members of the Corps of Cadets following plebe summer training. The GAO noted that the cadet committee also concluded that the meaningfulness of the fourth class system declines during the middle of the second semester, since the fourth class has gained what they need by that time.

On the other hand, the GAO pointed out that a majority of the Military Academy Association of Graduates committee members felt that significantly shortening the fourth class indoctrination period would not provide sufficient time to accomplish the objective of the fourth class system and would probably not be acceptable to the cadets.

The GAO reported that the upperclass cadets and midshipmen, particularly at the Military and Naval Academies, generally agree that the duration of plebe treatment should not be shortened. The GAO noted that, on the other hand, a considerable proportion of the fourth class cadets and midshipmen indicated that the indoctrination portion of the year should be somewhat shorter, with the consensus at the Military and Air Force Academies being that it should end about midway through the spring academic term. The GAO observed that, if the goals of the fourth class system were articulated with sufficient specificity so their accomplishment could be measured, the appropriate length of the indoctrination period could be established. The GAO concluded that, since the fourth class indoctrination system is vulnerable to abuse, it would not be advisable for the indoctrination program to extend beyond what is needed to accomplish its objectives. The GAO also concluded specific, measurable objectives could also serve to ensure that the indoctrination program does not last longer than necessary to accomplish those objectives, thereby addressing the concerns raised by some faculty, staff, alumni, and current students. (pp. 76-77, p. 88/GAO Draft Report)

Now on pp. 71-73.

DOD RESPONSE: Concur.

- **FINDING P**: **Better Enforcement of Prohibition Against Hazing Needed**. The GAO recalled that there have been very few cases of individuals being formally charged with hazing--and, in those cases where hazing-related activities have occurred, offenders have generally been charged with lesser offenses. The GAO reported that the reluctance of academy officials to deal more harshly with hazers may be related to their perceptions of (1) the characteristics of typical offenders and their motivations, (2) the characteristics of the typical hazing recipients, and (3) the failure of many of those who are hazed to report the incidents when they happen. The GAO found that the typical offender is a very committed and strongly motivated high performer attempting to "shape up" a fourth classman perceived to be a low performer. The GAO also found that there were indications that the potential punishment of separation may be viewed as too severe in many cases, which could explain the tendency to downgrade the charges. While the GAO found no evidence of gender or minority subgroups being targeted for more hazing, it did find indications that individuals, who are seen as poor performers, appear to receive more hazing-type treatment. The GAO observed that the situation can, to some extent, become a self-fulfilling prophesy. The GAO also observed that the extent of the hazing-type treatment does not come to light until the recipient has either left the academy or is in the process of leaving. The GAO concluded that the lack of timely reporting decreases the likelihood the hazer will be charged, since officials tend to be more skeptical of the validity of the charges and the details of the incidents may have faded from the memories of the principals and witnesses. The GAO also concluded that the willingness of hazing recipients to make specific charges increases when they separate, since they no longer need to fear reprisal. The GAO found that the percent of fourth class respondents, who indicated that they would hesitate to report an incident of hazing for fear of reprisal, was about 38 percent at the Naval Academy, 61 percent at the Air Force Academy, and 71 percent at the Military Academy. The GAO concluded that more explicit enforcement and punishment policies, including prevention-oriented punishments for first time, minor offenses could be developed. The GAO further concluded that the prevention and reporting of incidents of hazing-type treatment are specific duties of the cadet and midshipman chains of command, not the recipient of such treatment. The GAO also concluded that, since members of the chain of command may be involved, alternative reporting channels could be made available. Finally, the GAO concluded that those who report hazing incidents must be protected from reprisals. (p. 4, pp. 78-82, pp. 88-89/GAO Draft Report)

Now on pp. 73-75.

DOD RESPONSE: **Partially concur**. There is no offense category entitled "hazing-type treatment." Offenses are either classified as hazing or as some other charge. Those offenses, which are not strictly hazing and which are punished under another category of rule infraction (other than hazing), are generally awarded adequate punishment. Mitigating or exacerbating circumstances will usually temper or upgrade the punishment or censure. The Department strongly supports exercise of conduct oversight through the chain of command. Such is the case in the active forces and, therefore, is an appropriate method in full-time precommissioning programs. Any act of reprisal against individuals who report conduct violations is itself a conduct violation, and may subject the offender to dismissal.

- **FINDING Q**: **Need to Overcome Resistance from Cadets and Midshipmen.** The GAO reported that the academies are likely to encounter considerable resistance to change from the cadets and midshipmen. The GAO noted that it provided an opportunity for respondents to write in comments on any topics they chose--and that sentiment, particularly among the upperclassmen, ran heavily against reducing the rigor of the fourth class systems. The GAO noted that the comments generally conveyed the perception that the reduction of stress in the fourth class year had produced a class that was less disciplined and had less spirit and pride than its predecessors. The GAO also noted that cadets at the Air Force Academy made numerous comments regarding a perceived dilution in the rigor of the fourth class system. The GAO observed, however, there were also comments that raised many of the issues on the negative side of the fourth class system.

The GAO concluded that the academies will need to gain the cooperation of cadets and midshipmen, if they are to be fully successful in modifying the fourth class systems and eliminating hazing. The GAO noted that, although views differ significantly across academies, they were fairly consistent in showing a higher proportion of upperclassmen relative to fourth class cadets and midshipmen indicating the fourth class year should be primarily a rite of passage.

The GAO reported that another indicator of potential resistance to changes in the fourth class system is the prevalent belief among all classes of cadets and midshipmen, but particularly among those in the upper classes, that the purpose of the fourth class year is to screen out those who do not belong. The GAO found, however, that according to officials at each of the academies, it is not appropriate for students to screen out poor performers. The GAO concluded the perception of some students that the purpose of the fourth class is to screen out poor performers increases the potential for hazing abuse.

The GAO also concluded that many cadets, midshipmen, and alumni hold strongly traditional views regarding the purpose of the fourth class year; consequently, the academies are likely to encounter considerable resistance to changing the fourth class system. In addition, the GAO concluded there is a need to make it clear that screening out perceived low performers is not an appropriate student role. (p. 6, pp. 82-89/GAO Draft Report)

Now on pp. 75-79.

DOD RESPONSE: **Partially concur**. The Department agrees that it is not appropriate for cadets and midshipmen to screen out fourth classmen deemed as poor performers or as having low potential. The commissioned officer presence and oversight in the academies is intended to prevent that from happening. The Department does not agree, however, that gaining cadet and midshipmen cooperation to evolutionary changes in the academy programs will be particularly difficult.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

- **RECOMMENDATION 1**: The GAO recommended that the Secretary of Defense direct the Superintendents of the Military and Naval Academies to continue to clarify the objectives of their fourth class indoctrination systems and apply the question, "How is this activity related to the development of a professional military officer?"--to eliminate remaining elements that serve no demonstrated developmental purpose. (pp. 89-90/GAO Draft Report)

Now on p. 81.

DOD RESPONSE: **Partially concur** . The Department considers the awareness of requirements to oversee and modify the fourth class systems to be adequate, and that ongoing review will continue to produce needed refinements and improvements. The Department has expanded its oversight functions for military officer accession programs significantly over the past two years. Among other actions, the senior military officer in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Force Management and Personnel) now participates in annual superintendents' conferences (which are held each spring), and routinely deals with Service and academy officials on academy issues. He also reviews the reports of the academy Boards of Visitors, and is a participant in the Tri-Service ROTC planning conference. The Department will continue to work with the Services to clarify and improve the objectives of the fourth class systems.

- **RECOMMENDATION 2**: The GAO recommended that the Secretary of Defense direct the Superintendent of the Air Force Academy to conduct a thorough assessment of its fourth class system, similar in scope and scale to the reviews conducted at the Military and Naval Academies. The GAO indicated that specific attention should be paid to (1) clarifying the goals of the indoctrination system, (2) articulating specific developmental roles for all four classes, (3) eliminating negative leadership techniques, and (4) eliminating or reducing those elements of the traditional fourth class indoctrination system that are prone to abuse or have little relationship to the development of future officers. (p. 90/GAO Draft Report)

Now on p. 81.

DOD RESPONSE: **Partially concur**. The Department does not agree that specific direction is warranted. However, the Department will ensure that adequate oversight activity concerning the academies' programs is exercised. Starting in the 1992-1993 academic year, the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Force Management and Personnel) will review annual reviews of the fourth class system at the Air Force Academy, as well as the other Service academies, using the documentation collected from the office of the superintendents.

- **RECOMMENDATION 3**: The GAO recommended that the Secretary of Defense direct the academy superintendents to clarify (1) the distinctions between hazing and spirit-related activities and

(2) the limits on traditional fourth class indoctrination activities. (p. 90/GAO Draft Report)

Now on p. 81.

DOD RESPONSE: **Concur**. The Assistant Secretary of Defense (Force Management and Personnel) will ensure the differences are understood more clearly. The Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Military Manpower and Personnel Policy) works closely with the Services and the academy superintendents, and will continue to emphasize the need to clarify the distinction between hazing and acceptable behavior.

- **RECOMMENDATION 4**: The GAO recommended that the Secretary of Defense direct the academy superintendents to make it clear to cadets and midshipmen that it is not their function to screen out those who they do not think belong because that function legitimately resides only with academy officials. (p. 90/GAO Draft Report)

Now on p. 82.

DOD RESPONSE: **Concur**. The Assistant Secretary of Defense (Force Management and Personnel) will continue to ensure that this distinction is understood. (Also see DoD response to recommendation 3.)

- **RECOMMENDATION 5**: The GAO recommended that the Secretary of Defense direct the academy superintendents to set the length of the fourth class indoctrination period to the amount of time necessary to achieve specific objectives. (p. 90/GAO Draft Report)

Now on p. 82.

DOD RESPONSE: **Nonconcur**. While the Department agrees the length of the course should be examined annually, decisions as to the effective length of the course of instruction for the fourth class and other military training at the academies are appropriately left to the academy superintendents. Circumstances will dictate the requirements for fourth class training within each Service, and will in turn drive the appropriate length of the program. The Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Force Management and Personnel) is involved in policy discussions through participartion in the annual superintendents' conference held each spring.

- **RECOMMENDATION 6**: The GAO recommended that the Secretary of Defense direct the academy superintendents (1) to develop an explicit policy on how hazing will be handled and (2) take decisive action using the appropriate charge when hazing is identified (pp. 90-91/GAO Draft Report)

Now on p. 82.

DOD RESPONSE: **Nonconcur.** It is the Department's position that existing academy regulations adequately govern the actions required in cases of hazing. The Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Force Management and Personnel) will, however, examine these regulations to ensure the policies remain effective.

- **RECOMMENDATION 7**: The GAO recommended that the Secretary of Defense, to improve endorsement of the prohibition against hazing, direct the academy superintendents to make it a specific responsibility of the cadet or midshipman chain of command to prevent and report hazing treatment, rather than relying on the recipients of that treatment to report it. (p. 91/ GAO Draft Report)

Now on p. 82.

DOD RESPONSE: **Nonconcur.** The Department does not agree additional direction is needed. Existing regulations already require that all cadets and midshipmen report conduct violations, and that failure to do so constitutes a conduct violation, which subjects individuals to possible dismissal.

- **RECOMMENDATION 8**: The GAO recommended that, for first offense hazing-type practices of lesser seriousness, the Secretary of Defense direct the academy superintendents to consider establishing punishments to prevent recurrence, such as suspending the offender's involvement in fourth class indoctrination. (p. 91/ GAO Draft Report)

Now on p. 82.

DOD RESPONSE: **Nonconcur.** The Department does not agree that additional direction is needed. Punishment awarded for any disciplinary violation is intended, among other things, to teach the offender that the conduct in question will not be tolerated. Existing regulations clearly specify that repeat offenses will be dealt with more harshly, to the point of separation from the academies for second offenders. The academies currently take action to remove those who abuse the fourth class system from leadership roles and participation in training events involving the fourth class.

- **RECOMMENDATION 9**: The GAO recommended that the Secretary of Defense direct the academy superintendents to alleviate the reticence of cadets and midshipmen to report hazing-related activities by establishing legitimate alternative reporting channels to the chain of command. (p. 91/GAO Draft Report)

Now on p. 82.

DoD RESPONSE: **Nonconcur.** The Department does not agree additional specifications are necessary. The disciplinary system established at the Service academies already indicates that any specified offense be reported by cadets and midshipmen, regardless of class or seniority. Although, as in any regulatory system in a training environment, the disciplinary system is not flawless, it is effective. As is the case with all military organizations, there is also access to the Service or DoD Inspectors General. The Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Force Management and Personnel) will address the handling of academy cadet/midshipman disciplinary reporting at the annual superintendents' conference in the spring.

- **RECOMMENDATION 10**: The GAO recommended that the Secretary of Defense direct the academy superintendents to protect those who report hazing activity by imposing harsh punishments for anyone taking reprisals against those who report such incidents. (p. 91/GAO Draft Report)

Now on p. 82.

DOD RESPONSE: **Nonconcur.** The Department considers additional direction to be unnecessary, inasmuch as reprisals already are designated as serious disciplinary violations that subject violators to separation from the academies.

- **RECOMMENDATION 11**: The GAO recommended that the Secretary of Defense direct the academy superintendents to facilitate the acceptance of change (1) by educating the students, faculty, staff, and alumni on the necessity for change and (2) by involving them in the process. (p. 91/GAO Draft Report)

Now on p. 82.

DOD RESPONSE: **Partially concur.** Change is continuous in academic institutions. The Department believes that students, faculty, and administration already are fully incorporated in the process of educational change. The Department will continue to work through the Services in an increased oversight role. (Also see DoD response to recommendation 1.)

Description of Questionnaire Methodology

The purpose of this appendix is to set forth our questionnaire development process, our sampling approach, the response rates, the weighting of the data, the processing of completed questionnaires, the sampling error, and other methodological issues. This report is part of a broader review of the DOD service academies, which focuses on academics, military performance measurement, the treatment of women and minorities, harassment, and the operation of academy adjudicatory systems in addition to hazing and the treatment of fourth class cadets and midshipmen.

Questionnaire Development

Questionnaire items were developed to address the full scope of the broader review. Our initial questionnaire was developed for administration to Naval Academy midshipmen on the basis of interviews and a review of previous internal and external studies of the academies. In addition, two separate questionnaires were developed for administration to academy faculty members and to the commandant's staff, chaplains, and counsellors.

We pretested the Naval Academy questionnaire with a diverse group of midshipmen that represented different classes, genders, and races. We observed and timed the pretest respondents while they completed the questionnaires. After the pretest, we went through the questionnaire with them to determine whether they understood the questions or had any difficulties with any of the response formats or response alternatives. Revisions were made as appropriate.

The questionnaires then went through extensive reviews by (1) internal Naval Academy research personnel, (2) the research staff of the Navy's study group on the treatment of women, (3) the Defense Advisory Commission on Women in the Service, and (4) GAO consultants familiar with the academies.

The Naval Academy questionnaires were subsequently modified to apply to the Military Academy and the Air Force Academy. Questionnaire items were reviewed by the institutional research and commandant's staffs at each of the service academies to modify the terminology to apply to their academies, eliminate questions or response items that did not apply, and add questions or response items to address issues unique to their academy. The modified questionnaires were pretested at the Military and Air Force academies among groups of six to eight cadets, including women and minorities, and members from all four classes. We used the same pretest procedures used at the Naval Academy.

Sampling Methodology

To ensure that an adequate number of women and minorities would be included, we used a stratified random sample design allowing us to oversample those two groups. We used the last digit of the social security number to randomly select respondents from each strata.[1] We selected one final digit for all cadets and midshipmen and an additional final digit for women and minority males. Our goal was to produce a sample of about 10 percent of the white males, 20 percent of the females, and 20 percent of the minority males.

For faculty members, we used a simple random sample design, using the last digit of the social security number to yield a target sample of about 20 percent at each academy. At the Military and Air Force academies, we also sampled 100 percent of the civilian visiting faculty members.

Because of their limited numbers, we targeted the entire population of commandant's staff officers overseeing the student units, chaplains, and counsellors at each academy[2] rather than sampling.

Questionnaire Response Rates and Weighting of Data

The questionnaires were mass-administered to the academy students. Those selected for the sample were notified through academy channels to report to rooms designated for the questionnaire administration. The questionnaires were administered by our staff during what would otherwise be free time for the respondents. Respondents were assured of anonymity, and attendance was not taken at the survey administration. There were no make-up sessions for cadets and midshipmen who had conflicts.

Completed questionnaires were received from 527 Naval Academy midshipmen (a response rate of about 84 percent), 469 Military Academy cadets (a response rate of about 86 percent), and 493 Air Force Academy cadets (a response rate of about 91 percent).

Since we oversampled on the female and minority subgroups, we needed to apply weights to the responses to allow them to represent the total academy population. Raw weights were computed by dividing the number of subgroup responses into the subgroup population. However, applying raw weights would artificially increase the number of cases and inflate tests of statistical significance. To avoid such inflation, we used the raw weights to compute constrained weights, which when applied to the data make the number of weighted cases equal the number of unweighted cases.[3] Weights applied in this manner yield data that represents the total population without distorting significance tests.

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[1] The last four digits of social security numbers are essentially a random field based on the order in which individual social security offices process the applications they receive. Selecting one final digit could be expected to yield a sample of about 10 percent.

[2] Due to a misunderstanding with Military Academy officials, our sample included only one chaplain and did not include any counsellors.

For the faculty, the questionnaires were administered in mass by GAO personnel at the Naval and Military academies and through the mail at the Air Force Academy. Questionnaires were completed by 122 faculty members (19 percent of the population) at the Naval Academy, 132 (26 percent of the population) at the Military Academy, and 154 (27 percent of the population) at the Air Force Academy.

For the commandant's staff, the questionnaires were mass administered by GAO personnel at the Naval and Military academies and through the mail at the Air Force Academy. Questionnaires were completed by 49 staff members (94 percent of the population) at the Naval Academy, 61 (95 percent of the population) at the Military Academy, and 65 (86 percent of the population) at the Air Force Academy.

Processing Completed Questionnaires

We reviewed and edited each returned questionnaire. Responses were double-keyed, creating two files for each completed questionnaire. The two files were then compared for consistency and corrections made as necessary. We checked the overall accuracy of the keyed data by verifying every tenth record back to the responses in the completed questionnaire. None of the nine sets of questionnaires reached an error level of 1 percent.

Sampling Error

Since we surveyed samples of cadets, midshipmen, and faculty rather than the entire populations, the results we obtained were subject to some degree of uncertainty or sampling error. Sampling errors represent the expected difference between our sample results and the results we would have obtained had we surveyed the entire populations. Sampling errors are smallest when the percentage split responding to a particular question is highly skewed, such as 5 percent responding "yes" and 95 percent responding "no" and greatest when there is about a 50-50 percentage split in responses.

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[3] SPSS-X User's Guide, 3rd edition, Chicago, IL: SPSS, Inc., 1988.

Based on the number of completed questionnaires, we estimate that our results can be generalized to the cadet and midshipman populations at the 95-percent confidence level, with a maximum sampling error of plus or minus 4.1 percent at the Naval Academy, 4.4 percent at the Military Academy, an4.3 percent at the Air Force Academy.

For the academy faculties, we estimate that the results can be generalized to the faculty populations at the 95-percent confidence level, with a maximum sampling error of plus or minus 7.0 percent at the Air Force Academy, 7.8 percent at the Military Academy, and 8.4 percent at the Naval Academy.

The sampling errors for various subgroups for which data is cited in this report appear in table II.1. The decimal figures in the table are the sampling errors that correspond to various percentages of respondents selecting a particular response alternative. For example, if we state that 10 percent of Naval Academy midshipmen responded in a given way, the table shows a sampling error of 2.7 percent corresponding to "all midshipmen" and a 10 to 90 percent response split. This means that we can be 95 percent confident that the percentage of midshipmen responding that way in the population would be within 10 percent plus or minus 2.7 percent, or between 7.3 and 12.7 percent.

Table II.1: Sampling Errors for Various Academy Subgroups

			Percentage split in responses									
Subgroup	**Population**	**Sample**	**05/95**	**10/90**	**15/85**	**20/80**	**25/75**	**30/70**	**35/65**	**40/60**	**45/55**	**50/50**
Naval Academy												
All midshipmen	4,391	527	2.2	2.7	3.0	3.3	3.6	3.8	3.9	4.0	4.1	4.1
4th class	1,157	146	4.8	5.7	6.4	6.9	7.3	7.3	7.6	7.8	7.9	7.9
3rd class	1,206	135	4.9	6.0	6.7	7.3	7.7	7.7	8.0	8.2	8.3	8.3
2nd class	1,060	118	5.3	6.5	7.3	7.9	8.3	8.6	8.6	8.8	8.9	9.0
1st class	968	128	5.1	6.1	6.9	7.5	7.8	8.1	8.1	8.3	8.5	8.5
Upperclass	3,234	381	2.6	3.2	3.7	3.9	4.2	4.5	4.6	4.8	4.8	4.9
Faculty	630	122	5.2	6.0	6.8	7.3	7.8	7.8	8.1	8.3	8.4	8.4
Military Academy												
All cadets	4,296	469	2.3	2.9	3.2	3.5	3.8	4.0	4.2	4.3	4.4	4.4
4th class	1,190	125	5.3	6.4	7.1	7.7	8.1	8.1	8.4	8.6	8.7	8.7
3rd class	1,117	122	5.5	6.3	7.1	7.7	8.2	8.1	8.4	8.7	8.8	8.8
2nd class	1,006	123	5.4	6.2	7.0	7.7	8.1	8.0	8.3	8.5	8.7	8.7
1st class	983	99	6.0	7.3	8.2	8.8	9.2	9.1	9.5	9.7	9.9	9.9
Upperclass	3,106	344	2.8	3.4	4.0	4.1	4.5	4.7	4.9	5.0	5.1	5.1
Faculty	512	132	4.6	5.5	6.3	6.7	7.1	7.2	7.4	7.6	7.7	7.8
Air Force Academy												
All cadets	4,354	493	2.2	2.8	3.1	3.4	3.7	3.9	4.1	4.2	4.2	4.3
4th class	1,283	137	4.9	6.0	6.8	7.2	7.7	7.6	7.9	8.2	8.3	8.3
3rd class	1,027	122	5.4	6.3	7.1	7.7	8.1	8.1	8.4	8.6	8.7	8.8
2nd class	1,096	128	5.2	6.2	6.9	7.5	7.9	8.2	8.2	8.4	8.5	8.6
1st class	948	106	5.9	7.0	7.8	8.4	8.8	8.7	9.1	9.3	9.4	9.5
Upperclass	3,071	356	2.6	3.4	3.9	4.0	4.4	4.6	4.8	4.9	5.0	5.0
Faculty	565	154	4.0	5.0	5.6	6.0	6.4	6.4	6.7	6.9	7.0	7.0

Methodological Issues

Scale Development

Our questionnaire included a set of 21 items aimed at determining the extent to which cadets and midshipmen had personally experienced various types of hazing-type treatment during their fourth class year. These items were developed on the basis of a review of previous studies of hazing and discussions with academy students and officials. A scale measuring the extent of hazing experience was created by summing cadet and midshipmen responses across all 21 types of treatment. This scale approximated a normal distribution. The reliability of the scale was tested using Cronbach's coefficient alpha, which ranged from 0.84 to 0.87 for the three academies.

Our questionnaire also included items aimed at assessing how often respondents had experienced various physical and psychological symptoms of stress. These items were adapted from sets of somatic complaint and similar items used in various studies as indicators of stress and mental health.[4] We constructed scales of physical and psychological stress by summing, respectively, the responses to 15 physical symptom items and 8 psychological symptom items. These summed stress scales had high internal consistency (coefficient alpha ranged from 0.83 to 0.85 for the physical stress symptom scale and was 0.88 for the psychological stress symptom scale at the three academies). Both scales approximated a normal distribution.

We transformed these scale scores into categories of low, average, and high. The transformation assigned respondents scoring between one standard deviation above and below the mean to the category of "average." In a normal distribution, this typically accounts for slightly over two-thirds of the cases. Scores more than one standard deviation below the mean were assigned to the "low" category and those more than one standard deviation above the mean were assigned to the "high" category.

Making Longitudinal Inferences From Cross-sectional Data

One of our objectives was to determine the extent of hazing and another was to assess the actions taken by the academies to control and eliminate it. Ideally, the issue of whether actions taken have been effective should be studied using a longitudinal design. That is, data would have been collected at different points in time to see whether the frequency of hazing-type treatment changed after program changes were made. However, since we began our review after two of the academies had already made significant changes to their fourth class systems, a longitudinal design was not feasible. We therefore used a cross-sectional design, in which data was collected at a single point in time to draw inferences about changes in the extent of hazing-type treatment by comparing the responses across the four classes.

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[4] G. Gurin, J. Veroff, and S. Feld, Americans View Their Mental Health (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1960); T.S. Langner, "A Twenty-two Item Screening Score of Psychiatric Symptoms Indicating Impairment," Journal of Health and Human Behavior, Vol.3 (1962) pp. 269-276; S.M. Hunt, Jr., K. Singer, and S. Cobb, "Components of depression identified from a self-rating depression inventory for survey use," Archives of General Psychiatry, Vol. 16 (1967) pp. 441-447; R.D. Caplan, S. Cobb, J.R.P. French, Jr., R.V. Harrison, and S.R. Pinneau, Jr., Job Demands and Worker Health: Main Effects and Occupational Differences (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1975).

The questionnaires were administered to Naval Academy midshipmen in November 1990 and to cadets at the Military and Air Force academies in March 1991. The question regarding hazing-type treatment asked each respondent to recall how often they had personally experienced various forms of hazing-type treatment during their fourth class year. However, for each of the four classes, this presented a different type of recall problem.

For members of the Class of 1994, the fourth class at the time of our survey, their fourth class year had not yet been completed. They were at about the half-way mark at the Naval Academy and about the three-quarters mark at the Military and Air Force academies. In answering the questions on frequency of occurrence, fourth class respondents had to project their partial year's experience to a full year.

For the other classes, their fourth class year had been over for 6 to 10 months for the Class of 1993, 18 to 22 months for the Class of 1992, and 30 to 34 months for the Class of 1991. The longer the period of recall, the less accurate that recall is likely to be. Such memory errors could result in either underreporting or overreporting.

There is no way to tell how accurate the respondents' recollections were. There is some risk that what we are taking as differences in the extent of hazing experienced by each of the four classes is actually just a product of faulty recall. However, since the data shows some reduction in hazing-type treatment at the Military and Naval academies, which had made major changes, and no such reduction at the Air Force Academy, which made no major changes, we feel confident that the data has not been greatly distorted.

Appendix III

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